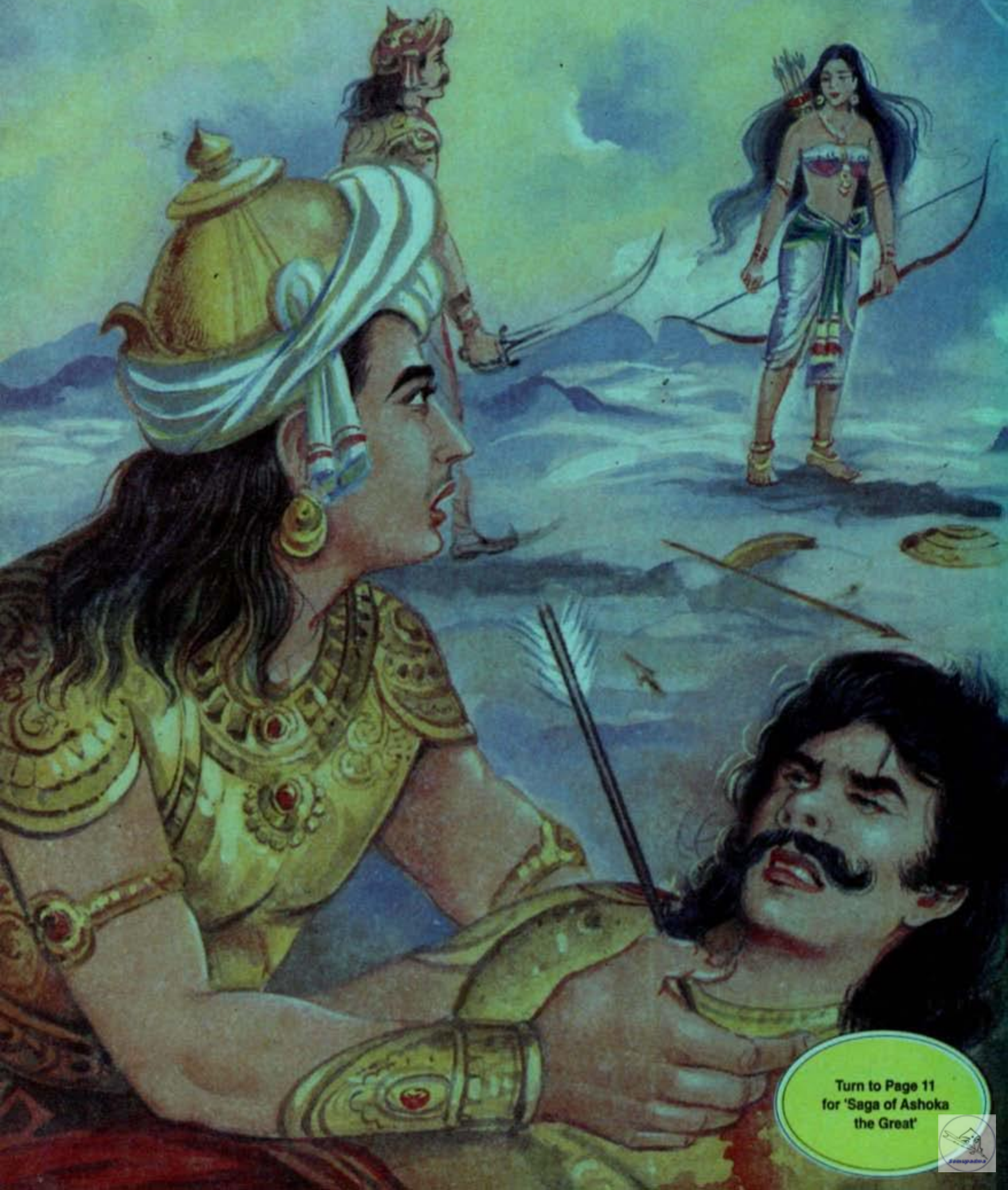


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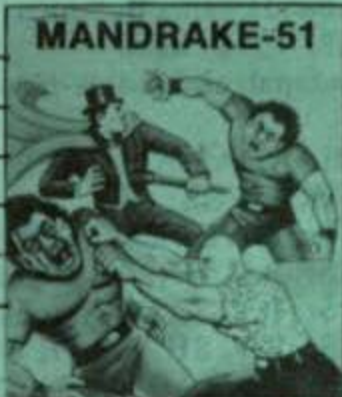
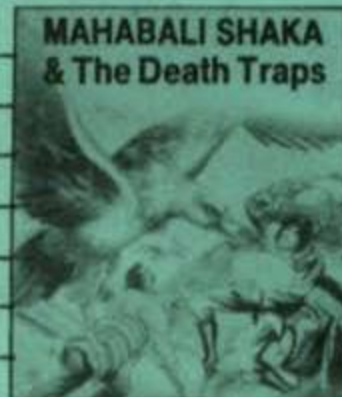
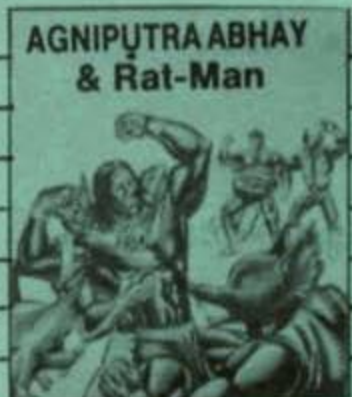
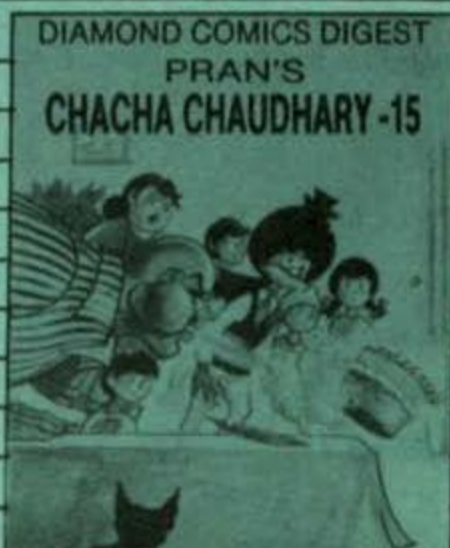
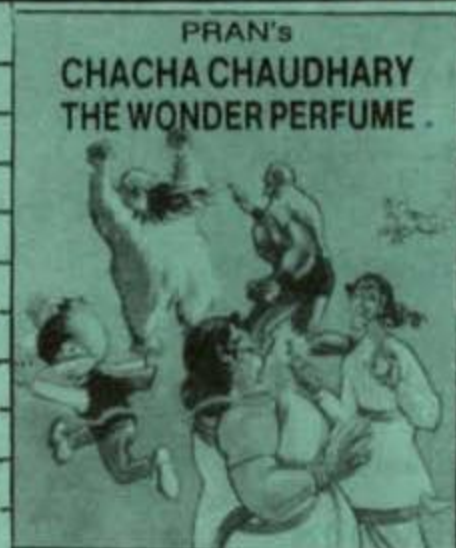
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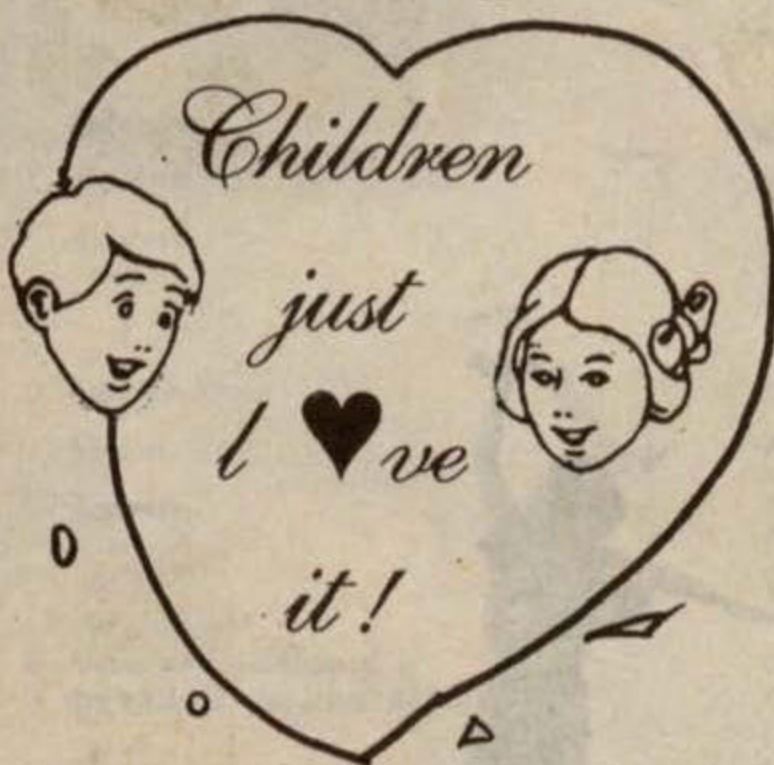


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SAGA OF ASHOKA THE GREAT: After the death of thousands and thousands of Kalingas who rose as one man to defend their country, the great Kalinga war is almost over. Ashoka has reasons to feel elated over his victory. However, he has also his doubts, especially when an arrow sent by a patriotic woman takes away his friend and companion Yasa's life. She claims that Kalinga has not yet been conquered. If so, has the whole expedition been a meaningless exercise? This brings about a great transformation in the mind of Ashoka. He remembers his wife, Vidisha Devi's pleading for a peaceful life, as propagated by the Buddha. The saga concludes with Ashoka's decision to spread the message of the Lord.

MAHABHARATA: King Virata of Matsya cannot believe what his son, Uttara, tells him—that it is his charioteer Brahannala, who was responsible for the complete rout of the Kaurava army. Uttara does not disclose the real identity of the woman, as requested by Arjuna. Though their one year exile in disguise is over, the Pandava princes wait for an opportune moment to reveal themselves. They enter the Court of Virata and occupy seats meant for monarchs. The king is bewildered and questions Yudhishtira the brahmin who has been keeping him company and playing dice with him. One after the other, the princes disclose their identities.

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Founder: CHAKRAPANI

Controlling Editor : NAGI REDDI

Art as a creative hobby

The premier organisation in India which constantly carries out researches in the field of education – the NCERT – had realised the importance of encouraging creative talents in children and suggested the inclusion of drawing and painting in the curricula up to the tenth standard. Those schools, which follow the NCERT pattern of education, fall in line with the suggestion and set apart drawing classes in the time-table and appoint art teachers to conduct them. Certain schools who have adopted other schemes and follow their own syllabi also have introduced 'art' as a subject of study, though they may not hold a test or make it a part of the assessment for promotion.

These schools form but a small percentage of educational institutions in the country. It is lamented that the ones run by the Government or municipal bodies have by and large neglected this aspect of children's education and growth. If at all some of them do have drawing classes in the time-table, they are managed by, not drawing teachers but someone from the staff who otherwise may enjoy a free period. It has also been the experience of those who organise painting/drawing competitions for children that even leading 'public' schools do not generally encourage their children to take part in "outside" competitions.

Drawing or painting is such a creative activity that gives scope for the children's imagination to flourish and their power of observation to be sharpened. Those who have an aptitude for this hobby must be helped to cultivate it. Parents need not harbour a fear that their wards may ultimately turn painters, and not become doctors, scientists, or lawyers, as they would wish them to.

Any hobby, for that matter, will take the children's minds off activities which might only retard their growth.

Founder, also Father of the Nation

Two months after Bangladesh celebrated the Silver Jubilee of its founding, the country declared that the founder - President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was to be recognised as the Father of the Nation. The world knows him as the leader who spearheaded the movement for the independence of what was till then known as East Pakistan.

The partition of India in 1947 saw East Bengal, which had a predominantly Muslim population, being given over to Pakistan and becoming its eastern province. The people there, speaking Bengali like their counterparts in West Bengal, soon began dreaming of "Soner Bangla" or a Golden Bengal, liberated from Pakistan.

However, it was in Pakistan's interest to crush the movement for autonomy. 'Bangabandhu' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other leaders were put behind bars. The oppression by Pakistan's representatives posted in its eastern half became so unbearable that there began an exodus towards West Bengal as well as Tripura, Meghalaya, and Assam. India received the refugees with open arms, but a stage came when she could not take in any more of them. The only solution was to create a climate when they could return to their homes. Use of force could not be avoided, and India joined hands with the Bangladesh liberation army.

The Indo-Pak war in December 1971 lasted only a fortnight. The occupation troops of Pakistan in the east surrendered on December 16, and the province was liberated from the hegemony of Pakistan. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was

released and he returned to the country now christened as Bangladesh to assume the office of President in January 1972. However, his rule was shortlived. He was assassinated on August 15, 1975 along with all the members of his family who were staying with him in capital Dhaka. The lone survivors were two of his daughters who were away in Germany. The elder of them, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, returned from England in 1981 to take up a political career. She became the leader of the Awami League founded by her father. When the League won the general elections in June 1996, she became the Prime Minister.

The constitution of Bangladesh, by its fourth amendment, had honoured Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by calling him the Father of the Nation. In 1979, this amendment was repealed by the then military rulers. However, the Speaker of the country's parliament, on February 19, pronounced that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman continues to be the Father of the Nation, and any disrespect to him would be treated as a violation of the constitution.

On December 16 last, Bangladesh celebrated the 25th anniversary of its Victory Day. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation of the liberation memorial to come up at the same site from where her father had declared independence of the country in 1970. It was celebration time in India, too. "Vijay Diwas" in Delhi witnessed an army parade at which the President, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, took the salute. Lying contiguous with Indian States, Bangladesh will always try to remain friendly with India.





SAGA OF ASHOKA THE GREAT

The story so far:

After the death of King Vindusara of Magadha, Prince Ashoka ascends the throne, despite hostility from Prince Sushima and his other step-brothers. As Ashoka's wife, Vidisha Devi, has embraced Buddhism and continues to live at Ujjain with her two children, Ashoka, on the eve of his coronation, has to take a second wife. Soon after that, he embarks on a military expedition against Kalinga.

"We launched a surprise attack. Even then the Kalinga people are offering such a stiff resistance. Isn't it surprising? I never expected this!" Yasa observed in the presence of King Ashoka and his general.

"That, too, when the land has no king, and it is a council of chieftains which is ruling it!" added Ashoka.

The general, who commanded the army to the best of his ability, stood without uttering a word, his head hung.

"Don't take our comments as criticism. We're just surprised," said Yasa.

The general nodded. "I'm no less surprised, sir," he said.

"Most of the Kalinga soldiers, who confronted us, were plain villagers. This land has an unusual tradition. There's a section of people who live as farmers, but whenever necessary, they take up swords. The regular army has a great support in them," added the general.

"I'm also told that these people don't even slightly hesitate to lay down their lives for the sake of their king or their country. Is that true?" asked Ashoka.

"True, my lord," replied the

14. THE HORRIBLE WAR



general.

Suddenly Ashoka flared up. In a hoarse voice he said, "So, imagine a situation when villagers and farmers succeed in driving away the powerful Magadha army, if not inflicting a crushing defeat on it! What's worse, imagine my condition when, in my very first expedition, I return disappointed, if not defeated!"

There was a grim silence in the king's camp. Suddenly, Yasa stood up and unsheathed his sword. "We'll never allow that to happen. Listen, General. Ask all the commanders and captains under you to follow a simple course of action. Just go on killing these people mercilessly. Don't wait to fight. Kill as many people as

possible and in whatever way possible. We can vanquish these people only by reducing their number." Yasa almost screamed out his words.

A drum was sounded in front of the king's camp. That meant, some urgent message was waiting for the king.

The naked sword still in his hand, Yasa went out and returned with a captain.

"The battle has grown more fierce around the fort of Toshali. We've already lost five thousand soldiers, though we've killed double that number of Kalingans. But what's alarming is, those who're offering this strong resistance are only part-time soldiers. The hard-core soldiers are inside the fort," said the captain.

"The strategy of the Kalingans, it seems, is to weaken us as much as possible before their regular soldiers pounce on us!" observed Ashoka. After a moment's pause, he shouted at the peak of his voice, "Come on, Yasa! Let's ourselves lead the Magadhan army!"

They all went out of the camp.

★ ★ ★

Ashoka's spies brought the intelligence that thousands of Kalingan women cooked food for their soldiers during the day, not far from the site of the bloody battle, and at night fed the soldiers and nursed those who were wounded. The

desperate Magadha general organised a battalion of soldiers to approach the village where the women were busy cooking. The soldiers set fire to the entire village. But the women snatched the burning sticks from the houses going up in flames and attacked the soldiers ferociously, screaming and cursing. Of course, all of them met with death in the ruthless hands of the soldiers.

For a full day thereafter, the battle continued at its peak. Thousands got killed on both the sides.

"There's good news, my friend," exclaimed Yasa the next day. "At last a part of the strong wall of the fort has just collapsed. I instructed the general to despatch our most crafty battalion into it and finish off the council of rulers as quickly as possible. Once the fort is without a leader, it'll fall. That'll be the end of our expedition."

"You've given me the happiest news of the season, my friend!" said Ashoka, embracing Yasa, and added, "How eagerly do I look forward to the moment when I'll stand on the roof of the fort's archway and proclaim that Yasa, my dear friend, is my viceroy and the governor of Kalinga, a province of the empire of Magadha!"

Yasa blushed, but he was happy.

As desired by Yasa, Ashoka's general found out the council house from which the twenty-one chieftains directed their war of resistance. Some of them were quite old, but each one



fought bravely before falling to the invaders' swords.

Only then did Ashoka and Yasa enter the fort.

"You've killed us, true, but can you destroy our spirit? The spirit will pass on to the next generation and even to a generation thereafter, until you've been avenged, until your unarmed womenfolk, too, have been brutally and treacherously massacred by our descendants," the most aged of the chieftains, lying in a pool of blood and gasping for breath, told Ashoka.

"Who killed your unarmed women folk?" demanded Ashoka. But there was no answer to his question. The chieftain was already dead.

"So, the famous Toshali fort of





Kalinga is at last ours!" said Yasa, gleefully.

"Yes, at last! But where are the residents?" asked Ashoka.

"Do you think we could have reached this citadel inside which the chieftains lived even if a single inmate had been alive? No! They offered resistance to the last man. My friend, all the inmates of the fort are dead or are wounded and taken prisoner, thrown in the open on the banks of the river Daya," said Yasa.

"So, what we've is an empty fort!" commented Ashoka.

"Empty, but for a huge treasure—a part of the wealth collected by generations of merchants trading with distant lands! No more shall their

fleet sail across the seas!" observed Yasa.

"But how is their incapacity going to help us? Why shouldn't they continue to carry on their trade and commerce, their brave voyages, as a part of our empire?" asked Ashoka.

"They'll of course carry on, but not as a part of your empire, but as the merchants of an independent kingdom!"

The words were uttered distinctly, though the speaker's voice was weak. He was yet another dying chieftain.

"Are you still capable of speaking?" shouted the general who was behind Ashoka and Yasa. Almost simultaneously he struck the chieftain with his sword, silencing him forever.

"Ah! There was no need to do that!" exclaimed Ashoka.

"My lord, we cannot afford to take chances while Your Majesty is here. If the fellow was able to speak, who knows if he did not hide any weapon to hurl at Your Majesty!" the general defended his own action.

"But, General, don't you know that while you're in the presence of His Majesty, you shouldn't do such things without His Majesty's sanction?" Yasa took the general to task.

"I apologise," said the general. "Nothing but our king's safety prompted my action!"

But Ashoka whispered to Yasa, "My friend, I'm afraid, bloody situations like this turn us into brutes!"

Then, looking at the general, the king asked, "Is it true that our soldiers massacred some unarmed women?"

The general hemmed and hawed.

"Speak out!" commanded Ashoka.

"They were no doubt unarmed, nonetheless they were the source of strength for our enemy, feeding and nursing the Kalinga soldiers. Those women were far more disciplined and hard-working than our soldiers. We had to destroy them in order to break the morale of the Kalingans."

"Where were they?"

"They came from different parts of the kingdom and camped in a village not very far from here!" replied the general.

"Will you lead me there?" said Ashoka and he turned to go. Yasa and the general had to follow him.

Outside the fort they were greeted by the deputy general of their army.

"My lord, the war is practically over, with no less than a lakh of men and women of Kalinga killed and another lakh and half taken prisoner."

"Thanks for the report," said Ashoka.

The deputy general felt encouraged. He said again, "No more do we hear any war cry, but only the moaning of the prisoners and cries of the women and children in the villages scattered around Toshali."

Ashoka, Yasa, and the general rode their horses.

Ashoka's bodyguards followed



them into the village where more than two thousand women lay slain. If the sight was horrible, the silence was even more horrible. Even jackals and vultures were too busy around the fort to visit this village.

"Yasa! Now that Kalinga has been conquered, I suggest that you take over as its ruler and I..."

Before Ashoka had completed his sentence, a woman's laughter was heard. The very next moment Yasa was found clutching at his heart. He tumbled off his horse. An arrow had pierced his chest.

Ashoka and his general dismounted immediately. The general asked his soldiers to search for and capture the assailant immediately.



"There's no need to launch a man-hunt for me. I'm here!"

The one to come out was a beautiful young woman, the bow still in her hand. The general caught hold of her.

Ashoka sat down near his friend. Yasa looked at him and tried to speak, but could not.

Ashoka sat stunned for a moment. Then he stood up and looked at the woman.

"What did you do?" he asked.

"I just proved that Kalinga has not been conquered. Also, I wanted to demonstrate that you cannot appoint a ruler over us. This shall be the fate of whoever is imposed on this land," said the young woman.

"My lord! Such impudence is intolerable. Kindly permit me to put her to death," said the general.

"No, General, no!" feebly said Yasa, recovering a little. "Let's not

forget that she could have done much worse. She could have aimed her arrow at King Ashoka instead of at me. That would have reduced the whole expedition and the conquest to a totally meaningless exercise, the worst possible humiliation for us. She deserves to live..."

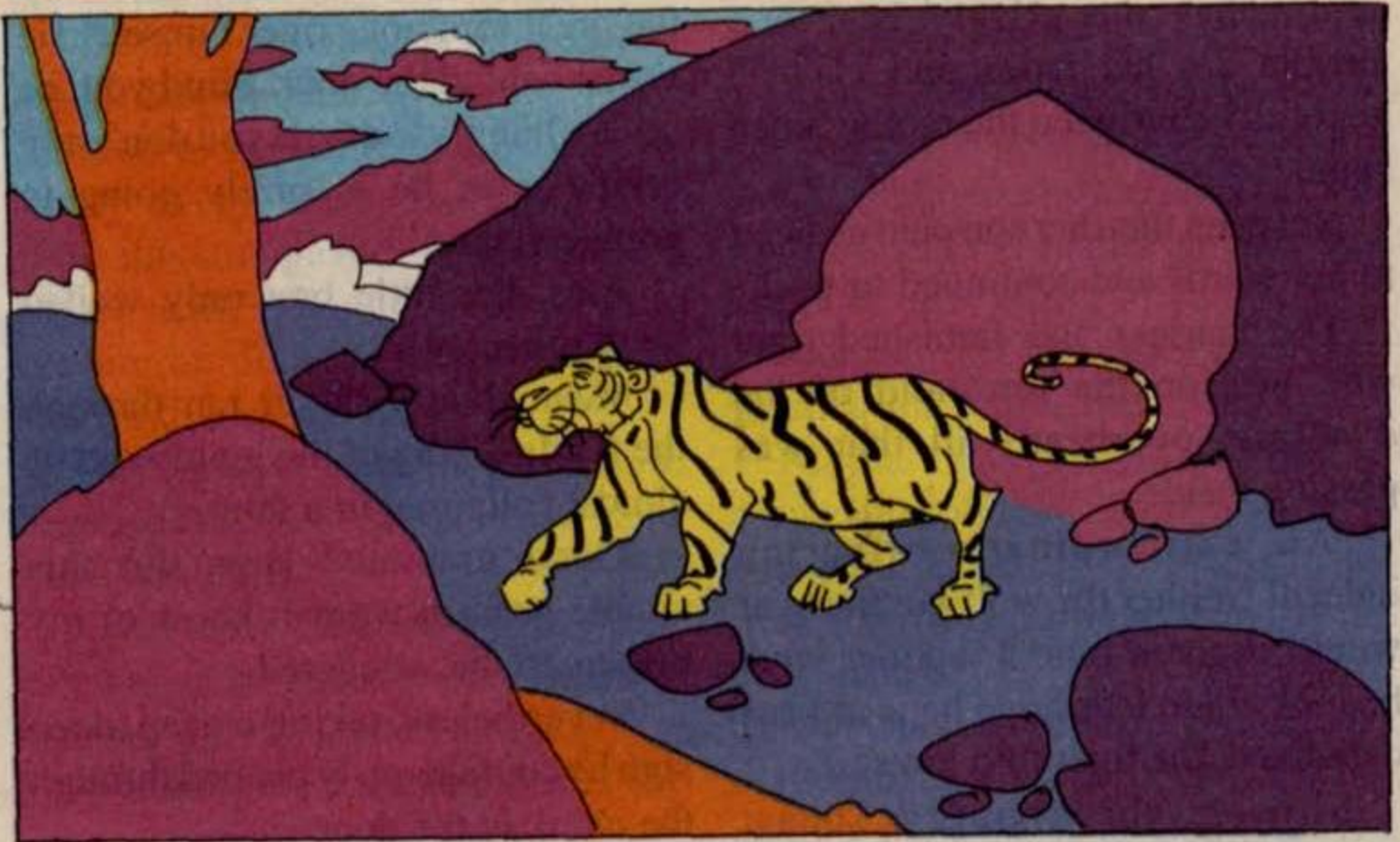
Yasa's voice failed. A soldier fetched some water and Ashoka tried to make Yasa drink. But Yasa was no more.

There prevailed a sepulchral silence. Ashoka kept sitting near the body of his friend, silently musing over his last words: The whole expedition and conquest could have been reduced to nothing if the young woman had taken a slightly different aim. Well, did the expedition and conquest mean anything even otherwise? he wondered.

(To conclude)



A TERROR FOR THE TIGER



A long, long time ago there lived a tiger in the heart of the forest. He was a cruel and ferocious beast. His thundering roar was enough to scare away the other animals. He was also a terror to the simple inhabitants of the wee little hamlet that lay on the edge of the jungle. In fact, the tiger was very proud of himself. He always marched swinging his tail and chuckled with delight as the others ran helter-skelter to make way for him. Quite naturally, the tiger had taken it for granted that he was feared by all!

It so happened that one dark dreary

winter night, the tiger felt terribly hungry. Alas, for two days he had not taken a morsel of food. How could he, when all his preys were securely hidden in the cosy nooks and corners of the forest? So the utterly famished and fearless king slowly plodded his way to the sleepy little village on the outskirts of the woods. He decided that for a change, he must eat a human being.

A tiny flickering light led him to a small hut. As he stealthily approached the door and was about enter, lapping his tongue, he suddenly heard the farmer's wife chiding her wailing son.



"Shut up, you naughty fellow! There comes the wolf with his sharp teeth to carry you to his den!"

But the child did not stop crying.

"You obstinate little boy, here approaches the grizzly bear and terrible are his fangs and claws!" hopefully cautioned the mother once again.

But even then her son paid no heed to her words and continued to wail.

The fearless and famished tiger who was on the threshold of the dwelling, overheard all that was passing inside.

'An extraordinary offspring indeed! Neither the wolf nor the bear would frighten him! I wonder what he looks like, let's hope he is at least delicious!' the tiger told himself.

Slowly the hungry beast straightened up and flexed his joints

as the obstinate child still continued to cry.

Just then the impatient mother, trying to quieten her son, once again said unwittingly, "Look, here comes the great ferocious tiger himself! He is just behind the door. Mind you, he is very hungry today. If you don't stop crying now, he is surely going to gobble you up!"

Alas, her little brat only wailed louder than ever.

Meanwhile a shiver ran through the fearless king of the jungle and he almost collapsed in a faint.

'Good gracious! How did this simple peasant woman know of my presence?' he wondered.

Nevertheless, taking a deep, deep sigh he courageously peeped through the chink in the door.

What did he see? The little boy



still cried at the top of his voice, moving his limbs as though ready to wrestle. There was no sign of fear in him. He was not afraid of the tiger either, the great ferocious beast.

The tiger, extremely perplexed, fell into a deep ponder. When the mere mention of his name was enough to terrify every living creature, how come this strange little fellow did not bother at all? A hungry tiger about to eat him up didn't even put any fear into him!

The fearless king of the forest now began to feel really worried and have some doubts.

'Can there really be another creature more terrible and ferocious than the tiger?' he tried to think.

Just then the mother's impatient voice was heard once again.

"For heaven's sake, please stop

crying. Here ... here is a big round red pomegranate!"

Immediately, as though by magic, the little naughty boy became quiet.

The bewildered tiger wondered once again, 'Who could be this big round red pomegranate? Surely he is much more powerful and terrifying than I! Otherwise how could the mere mention of my name quieten this stubborn little boy?'

Indeed, the tiger became very anxious and scared too!

At that very instant something heavy and solid fell right on his back with a big thud.

The terrified animal bounded for his precious life.

'Oh! Oh! It's that dreadful big round red pomegranate who sits on my back holding my ears. Dear God, help me get rid of him or else he is soon going



to eat me up!' cried the tiger to himself in desperation.

It so happened that a thief was waiting on the roof for his chance. But as there was no sign of the woman going to sleep or the hut containing anything of value, he decided to leave. In pitch darkness he mistook the tiger for a cow and jumped onto its back. But when he realised that he was in fact riding a tiger, he was naturally scared almost to death.

The tiger darted forward, desperately trying to throw the big round red pomegranate off his back! But the man held on tightly to the animal, because he feared that the moment he let go and fell on the ground the tiger would make a hearty meal of him.

Thus, with its human rider, the tiger sped like a bolt of lightning into

the dense forest. He continued to run and run until the clouds were cleared and there was moonlight.

Luckily for the thief, he found the aerial roots of a banyan tree hanging to his reach. He at once grabbed one of them and swung himself up to safety amidst the branches.

The tiger, suddenly feeling relieved of his burden, took a deep breath of relief. 'Oh that terrifying creature, the big round red pomegranate! He has at last gone and I am saved, thank God!'

So the fearless tiger, the proud king of the jungle, hungry and worn out, returned to his cave.

'Who knows if the human flesh was not poison for a tiger!' he said by way of consoling himself, even though the pangs of hunger was almost killing him.

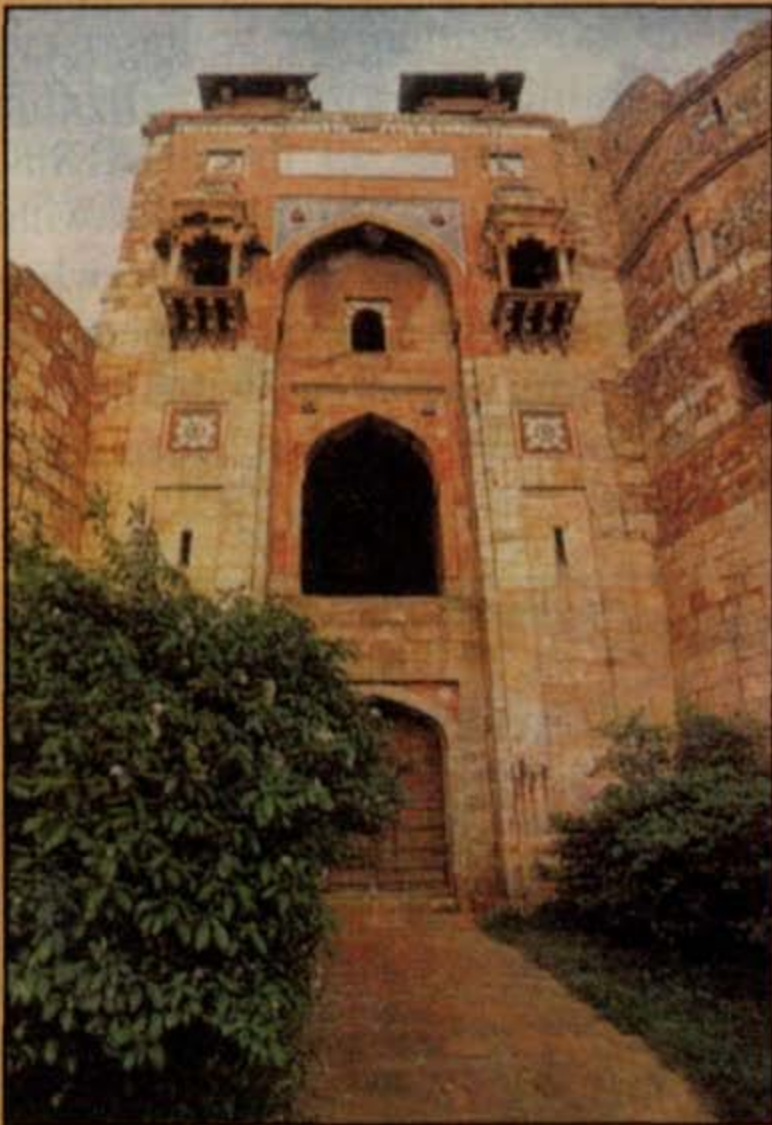
– Retold by Anup Kishore Das





THE MAJESTIC PURANA QILA

The Purana Qila in the heart of Delhi lies on the site of the legendary city of Indraprastha, home of the Pandavas of the epic, the *Mahabharata*. Humayun, the second Mughal emperor of around 1533, called it Din Pannah. Sher Shah Suri, who succeeded the emperor, chose its walled enclosure as the citadel around which he erected an architectural monument by constructing the sixth



city of Delhi. Between 1540 and 1545, Sher Shah strengthened the citadel and called it Shergarh and built the Qila-i-Kunha Masjid in 1541. The entrance to the rectangular shaped Qila is through the Talliqi Darwaza. Opposite to the rugged walls of the Qila is Delhi's picturesque zoo with a variety of rare animals. Excavations inside the Qila revealed stone sculptures and cooking utensils which prove that the site has a continuous cultural history of over 2,000 years.

JAIGISAVYA

A great sage, Jaigisavya was once the guest of a hermit, Devala, who had his hermitage in a charming part of a forest, at the foot of a hill.

Devala and his disciples looked after Jaigisavya well, but the guest had very little need of any service. He was always calm and cheerful, whatever be the situation.

One day, while Jaigisavya sat in meditation, Devala went to the sea for a bath. But he was surprised to see Jaigisavya emerging from the waters. How could the guest reach the sea before him? He concluded that Jaigisavya knew some shorter route to the sea.

But back at his hermitage, Devala saw his guest still seated in meditation! His surprise only increased.

Next day, Devala paid a visit to a

friend's house. To his surprise once again, he saw Jaigisavya there.

This vision of Devala was repeated again and again. Wherever he went, the moment he remembered his guest, the guest appeared to be there already.

He asked Jaigisavya about the mystery. But Jaigisavya did not seem to be aware of the strange phenomenon.

Later, when Devala put his question to some great sages, he got an explanation for it. Jaigisavya remained in the Brahma Consciousness all the time. Since everything and every place was within Brahma, Jaigisavya was everywhere. It was because Devala remembered him—who was his guest—that he could at once see the sage wherever he went!



DO YOU KNOW?

UNIQUE NEW YEAR

In a small village called Umasch, in Switzerland, the New Year is celebrated on January 13. Men dress up as trees, take part in the festival, and go from house to house wishing everyone a Happy New Year. Some of them wear costumes made of moss, dry leaves, and snail shells. Others dress in straw and bark, with tails and works.



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RAINBOW



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FULL OF FRAGRANCE AGARBATHI

An agarbathi is a perfumed stick which is used as a room freshener and which also has religious significance. It is often lit before idols. The amazing fact is that nearly 498,000 Indian homes purchase agarbathis for about Rs. 710 crores. The agarbathi is taken from the 'Machilas Macrantha' tree. In the beginning sandalwood, rose and jasmine fragrances were used. Today the latest perfumes of Europe are in demand. France is the home of most of these perfumes.

HEY, WHAT'S MISSING?

☆ *What is the meaning of the expression 'missing the wood for the trees'? asks Basab Chakrabarty of Chandannagar, West Bengal.*

It means that the persons concerned are so engrossed in the details of something that they forget or do not realise the general purpose or importance of the thing as a whole. They fail to grasp the whole, probably because of the abundance of detail or their over-concentration on details. Imagine that a group of people desire to reform the examination system and waste a lot of time on the size of the answer paper, the medium used for writing, whether the questions should have a multiple-choice of answers or should elicit full answers from the examinees, etc. Whereas, the main purpose of the study would be whether to go for periodical assessment or to put the candidates to one single tiring test at the end of the year.

☆ *I want to know the meaning of the phrase "There is something black in the pulse", writes Katya, of St. Joseph's College, Vizag.*

The measured beating of the heart and the arteries is known as pulse. Doctors "feel" the pulse to find out whether the throbbing is of the required or normal measure. When they find that it is irregular, they consider it as something 'black' in the pulse, something dark which would require a proper probe to reveal the cause of the irregularity.

☆ *Reader P. Parameswar, of Atmattek, Orissa, wants to know which is the correct expression "Fox pass" or "Faux pass".*

Both are wrong, in the sense the original French expression *faux pas* (pronounced foe-pa) simply means a blunder, a false step, a mistake. If you commit a faux pas, sometimes it will be a socially embarrassing action, too. An example would be to address Mr. P.V.Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister at a function where Prime Minister Deve Gowda is very much present !

☆ *Reader Rabindra Kumar Behura of Cuttack quotes a newspaper report in which the indefinite article 'an' has been used before the abbreviation CIA. He asks whether what he saw in print is correct.*

The answer will be **no**. The 'C' in CIA is pronounced as 'see'; in the expansion 'central' also, 'C' is a consonant and will, therefore, take only 'a' and not 'an'. Unlike the abbreviation M.P. (em pee) and its expansion Member of Parliament. When we use the abbreviation, we write **an** M.P., because the letter M begins with the sound of a vowel. However, **a** Member of Parliament is the correct usage.



New Tales of King Vikram
and the Vampire

WHO WAS BLIND?

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the trees. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits. Flashes of lightning revealed fearsome faces.

But King Vikram did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse spoke: "O King, normally you should be enjoying a good sleep at this hour of the night. Instead of doing that, what makes you go through this strange rite? Are you waiting for a gift of land, gold, or a woman? Or are you trying to acquire possession of one or all of them? Let me remind you of one thing: Sometimes one's efforts to achieve something will rebound and have exactly the opposite effect. I've a good example of this. Listen to the story." The vampire then began his narration.



taken in a chariot, and as it rode fast, the young women enjoyed the sights on either side. After some time, they asked the charioteer to stop, to allow them to rest for a while beneath a tall tree.

Princess Ratnamayi was caught unawares when a huge snake slithered down the tree and approached her hissing, ready to attack her any moment. Her friends and even the charioteer stood motionless with great fear and did not make any attempt to protect her. Instead, they cried aloud and shrieked with fear.

At that time, Madhavsena was out hunting. He heard the cries and rushed to the place from where the cries came. He recognised the princess and realised the danger lurking near her. It was a huge python and it was slowly advancing towards her. He had only a sword with him and he would have to go near the snake to cut it into pieces. But it might overtake him. What should he do?

As he was contemplating a strategy, the tribal youth, Amarsingh, came that way. He took stock of the situation in a trice and aimed an arrow at the snake. Its head got severed from the body and lay some distance away.

The princess heaved a heavy sigh of relief. She went up to the youth and said: "I'm not asking who you are or where you come from. After all, you've saved my life, and I'm indeed grateful to you. Please accept this

Mohinipur was once ruled by Madhavsena. The western parts of the kingdom were guarded by a mountain range. Whenever there was a threat of attack from the neighbouring kingdom, the hill tribes used to help him with men and arms and fight for their king. Samarsingh was their Chief. His only son was Amarsingh. He was very clever at using the bow and arrow.

Paschampur was Mohinipur's neighbour. Its king Pratapsena had accepted the superiority and suzerainty of Mohinipur following certain unexpected incidents. His daughter, Ratnamayi, one day went into the forest along with her friends to enjoy Nature's beauty. They were

from me." Ratnamayi took off her pearl necklace and gave it to him.

The youth thanked her and said, "My name is Amarsingh. I'm a tribal, living in these parts."

"I'm glad to hear that," said the princess. "Please come to the capital. I'm Ratnamayi, the daughter of King Pratapsen of Paschimpur. I wish to take you as my bodyguard."

Madhavsena was all the while listening to the conversation between Ratnamayi and Amarsingh. The princess did not even look at him. She smiled at Amarsingh and got into the chariot along with her friends and drove away.

What a shame! thought Madhavsena. He should have saved the princess and earned her gratitude. He felt envious of the tribal youth. From that moment, his mind was tormented with all kinds of thoughts. The princess of a kingdom which had accepted his suzerainty and who he was hoping to wed was not only disregarding his feelings but expressing her affection to a mere tribal youth! No, he must put an end to this affair before it assumed gravity. How should he go about it?

In the meantime, Ratnamayi took Amarsingh as her personal bodyguard. Madhavsena heard about this. Now he should not delay a decision. He sent a message to Pratapsen through an emissary. It read: "I have decided to wed your daughter



Princess Ratnamayi. I shall not have a change of mind, nor will I allow myself to be dissuaded from my desire and decision. In the event of a refusal from you, I shall be left with no option other than to lead my army against Paschimpur, defeat you in battle, and then wed Ratnamayi." The message thus contained a threat as well.

Pratapsen was happy inasmuch as the ruler of his neighbouring kingdom with whom he maintained friendly relations had expressed a desire to marry his daughter and become his son-in-law. He sent for his daughter. "You're really fortunate, Ratna!" he said patting her affectionately. "Madhavsena is proposing to marry you. Soon you will be a queen.— the





queen of Mohinipur." He then handed the letter to her.

Ratnamayi read the letter from beginning to end, and then smiled. However, the next moment she became grave. "Father, what do you make out of this message? Do you think he is sincere in his love for me? If that is so, he wouldn't have written such a letter. He's arrogant because of his military strength, which is greater than a genuine love for me. I don't like to be the wife of such a person. I shall not accept his proposal. Don't worry, I shall myself send a reply to this letter."

Pratapsen knew that he was not capable of changing his daughter's views once she took a decision.

Ratnamayi's reply read like this: "O King! I have seen your letter to my father. As the contents concern me, I thought I should send a reply myself. I am not ready for a marriage now. At the same time, do not nurture a hope that you will be able to subjugate me with army power. That will be just a wishful thinking. You may be able to conquer our kingdom with your military might; but you will not be able to conquer my mind. You may, therefore, think twice before you embark on any foolish adventure."

The princess showed her reply to her father. "What you state is correct, Ratna," remarked Pratapsen. "Suppose Madhavsena is provoked on reading this letter and leads his army against us? We won't be able to resist for long and he'll only capture us and take us to Mohinipur. In fact, I fear the worst." He revealed his feelings to his daughter, but allowed her to despatch the letter.

King Pratapsen anxiously awaited the arrival of the troops from Mohinipur. Days went by, then weeks, then months. There was no sign of Madhavsena or his army. What would have happened to him? wondered Pratapsen.

True, something did happen to Madhavsena. He decided to wait for another opportunity to earn the favour of Ratnamayi. "What do you say now, father?" the princess asked of Pratapsen one day. "Just as I had

expected, Madhavsena seems to have changed his mind. He must have realised that one cannot subjugate human mind with the help of an army."

Some more days went by. One evening, Ratnamayi was walking in the royal garden. Her bodyguard Amarsingh was standing by at the entrance. Suddenly, a black snake came out of a heap of leaves and unawares of the princess, bit her on the leg. Her loud cries brought Amarsingh to her side in a moment. He saw the snake that was slithering away. He aimed an arrow and killed it.

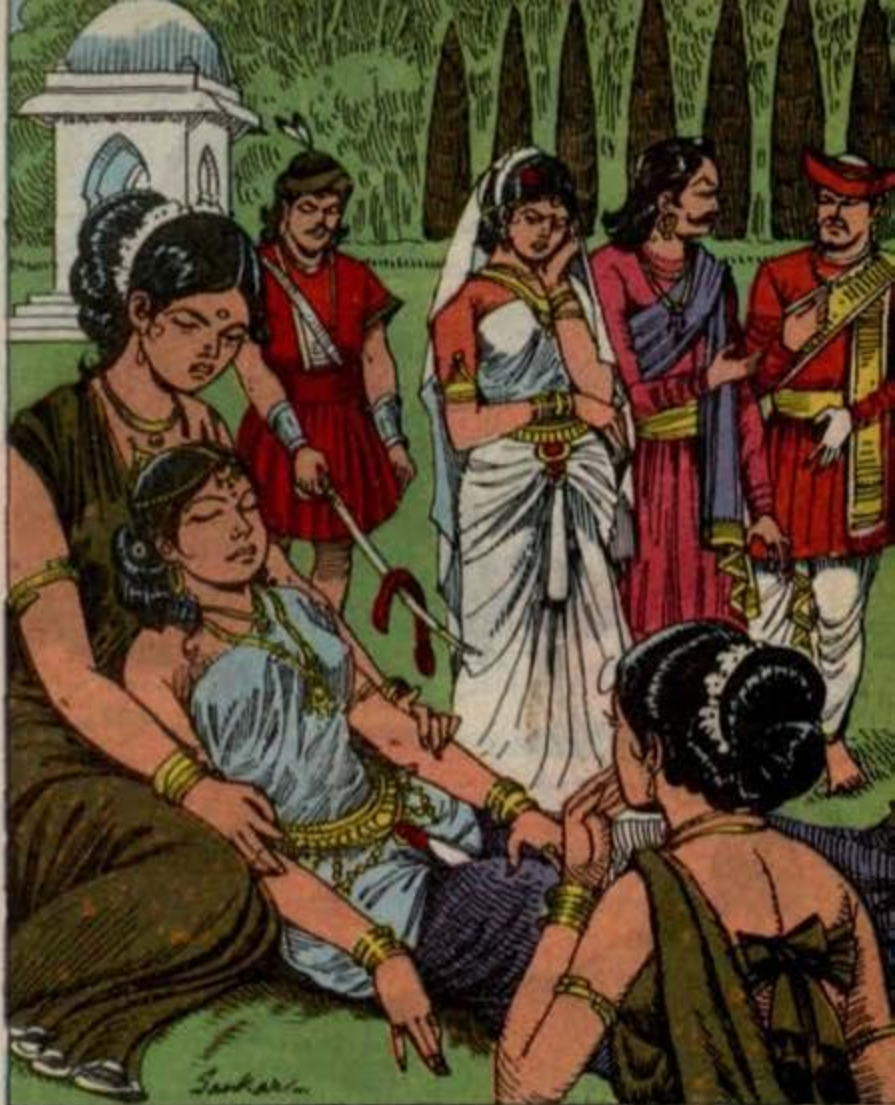
The royal physician examined the princess and then wished to take a look at the serpent. He gave Ratnamayi some medicines to relieve her of pain and said, "The poison that has got into the system will be drained now. But there is one danger. She will go blind!"

The king was very much perturbed. "Isn't there any medicine to prevent that, O revered Vaidya?"

"Of course, there's one medicine, but only one," replied the physician. "It's very difficult to obtain. There's a lot of effort and hazard involved."

"Please tell me where and how it can be obtained," said Pratapsen.

"There's a place called Rakshagiri, which is the abode of serpents like the one that bit the princess," explained the physician. "A tree called Devataru grows there – the only one of its kind.



And just one flower blooms in fifty years. If the flower can be procured and crushed, the juice may be applied to the eyes, and they will regain sight. But then, the tree is guarded by serpents. Would there be anyone here who's daring enough to procure the flower?"

Amarsingh on duty at the door to the princess's chamber was listening to what the physician was telling the king. "Your majesty, please allow me to go to Rakshagiri. I shall get the flower by some method."

Pratapsen felt greatly relieved. "You take the fastest horse from the royal stable and come back as quick as possible."

Madhavsena heard the news. He





thought he could reach Rakshapuri faster than Amarsingh and pluck the flower before he took it.

Meanwhile Amarsingh had already reached Rakshagiri and seen the lone flower on the crest of the tree. There was no question of climbing the tree because several serpents lay entwined around the tree. It would be impossible to kill all of them. The only way was to shoot an arrow at the flower which would then fall to the ground.

He took aim and sent an arrow, and the flower fell down. But the moment it got severed from the tree and dropped to the ground, the serpents too slithered down and gathered around the flower to protect it. Amarsingh was taken aback. Now

there was no way out to disturb the serpents and get hold of the flower. He stood stupefied.

It was then he saw that a horse had stopped in front of him. He looked up and was surprised to see Madhavsena. "Oh! So you're already here to procure the flower and save Princess Ratnamayi?" There was a tinge of sarcasm in his tone. The king had also seen the flower on the ground being guarded by serpents.

"Your majesty, I never could guess that you, too, would be coming here to get hold of the flower," said Amarsingh with all humility. "There! I've managed to bring the flower down by an arrow. But there's no way of getting hold of it from the serpents guarding it. They are all poisonous and if you get bitten, you may go blind yourself; you may even lose your life. So, don't go anywhere near the flower, please!"

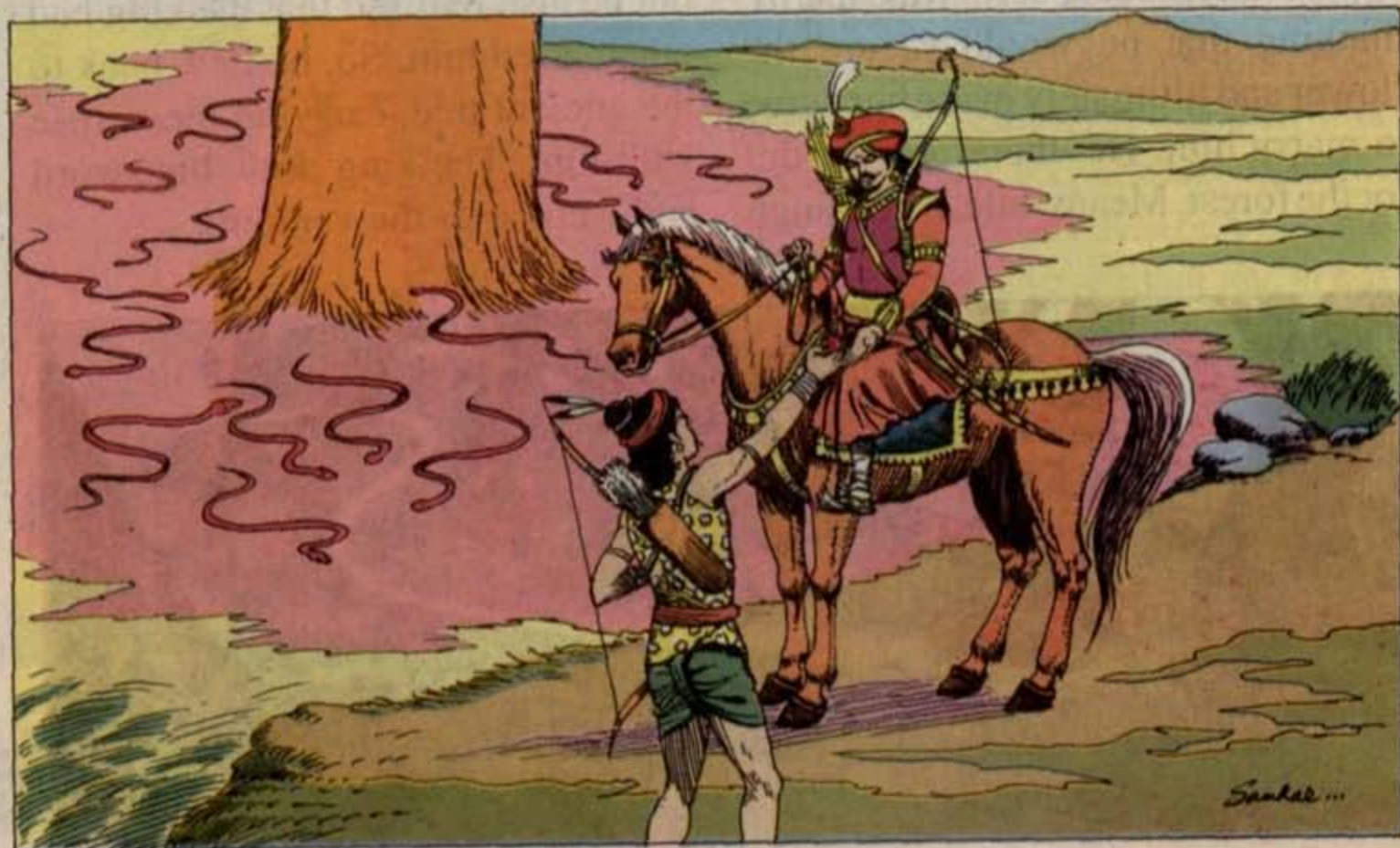
Before Madhavsena could realise what was happening, Amarsingh rushed towards the flower and picked it up, but as he turned round he could not prevent a serpent biting him on the leg. He went back to Madhavsena. "O King! Take this flower to King Pratapsena and save the princess. When she gets back her eyesight, you must marry her. I don't mind going blind. Who knows, I may even die before long." Amarsingh had put on a brave face.

"Amarsingh! Till now I had taken

you as my enemy," said Madhavsén. "I was quite wrong. No, I shall not leave you here to go blind. I shall take you with me and see that you, too, are cured." He then helped Amarsingh to climb the horse and rode fast to his capital.

The vampire concluded the story there and turned to King Vikramaditya. "O King! Tell me, wasn't Amarsingh's behaviour baffling? He agreed to become the princess's bodyguard with the intention of marrying her, didn't he? If that be so, then why did he risk his life to get hold of the flower only to hand it to Madhavsén and suggest that he married the princess after she got back her eyesight, forgoing his own chance to marry her? Till Madhavsén came, he had no intention of rushing in among the serpents to pick

the flower. Why did he do that knowing fully well that there wouldn't be an escape from the serpents? Why didn't he allow Madhavsén from picking the flower himself? And why didn't the king use force to make Ratnamayi marry him after threatening to lead his army against Paschimpur? He was sure that he would not meet with any resistance. He didn't get angry when he read the reply from Ratnamayi. Why? Didn't he love the princess? Why did he decide to go for the flower himself? Was it because he had genuine love for her and was upset when he heard that she had been bitten by a serpent? Or did he do that to steal a march over Amarsingh whom he considered his rival? If you know the answers but prefer not to satisfy me, let me warn you, your head will be blown to pieces!"



The questions were too many for Vikramaditya to answer him immediately. So, he took time. "Everything is clear and there's no conflict of values. The princess took Amarsingh as her bodyguard not because she had fallen in love with him. On his part, he accepted that position not with the intention of earning her affection and marrying her. She had rewarded him because he exhibited how adept he was in using the bow and arrow. He was happy that such a recognition came his way. Madhavsena had a change of mind when he read Ratnamayi's letter. He realised that it would not be proper for him to use force to marry her. So, he was waiting for an opportunity to earn her affection through other means. When he saw such an opportunity, he set out for Rakshagiri, thinking that he would secure the flower and ultimately make her agree to marry him. He, therefore, set out for the forest. Meanwhile, Amarsingh

realised that if he were to dare pick up the flower, he would surely be bitten by the serpents. Then how would he reach the flower to Ratnamayi? It was then that Madhavsena arrived, and he felt relieved. At least there was someone to carry the flower to Paschampur, and save Ratnamayi. That's how he took the risk of getting among the serpents and picking up the flower. And just as he had apprehended, he was bitten and knew that he would not live long. So, he asked Madhavsena to take the flower and see that the princess was cured and he married her. That sacrifice caused a change of heart in Madhavsena. He took Amarsingh to be a martyr, and so decided to try his best to save him."

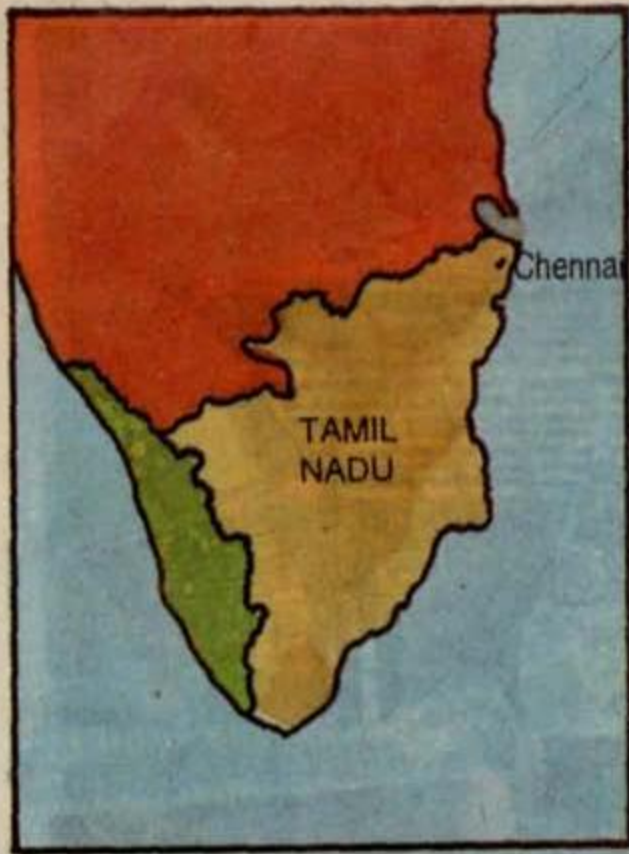
The vampire was pleased with the explanation given by Vikramaditya, but he also realised that the king had outsmarted him. So, he flew back to the ancient tree, carrying the corpse with him. The king drew his sword and went after the vampire.



Coastal Journeys 18

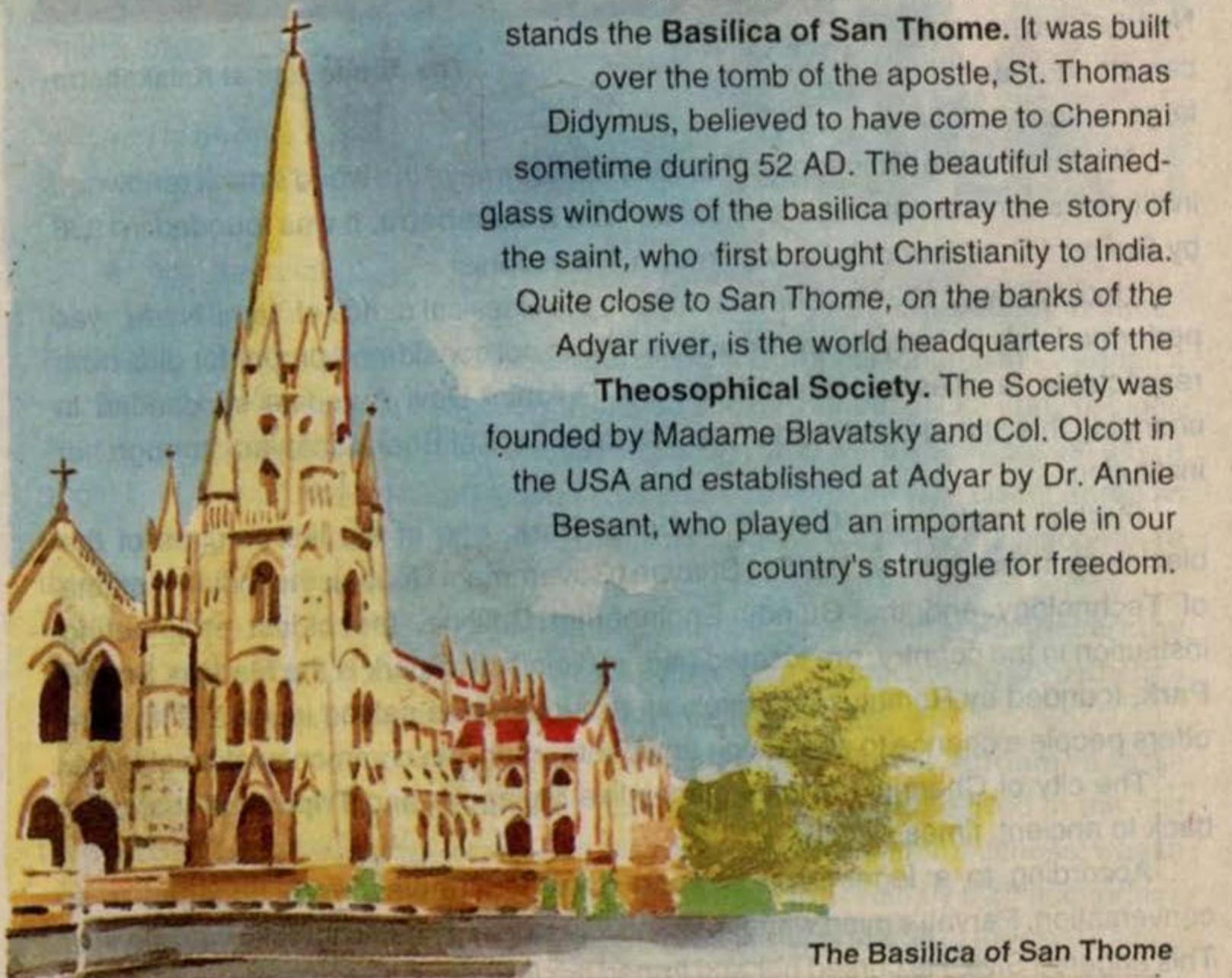
In Chennai

Script : Meera Nair ♦ Artworks : KS Gopkumar



When Francis Day built Fort St. George, he was severely criticised for selecting a place which had no natural harbour. Ships had to anchor far out at sea and the passengers had to be brought ashore by masullas, boats made of planks tied together. However, by 1881, an artificial harbour was constructed north of the Marina beach. Today, Chennai is a major shipping centre.

At the south end of the Marina beach stands the **Basilica of San Thome**. It was built over the tomb of the apostle, St. Thomas Didymus, believed to have come to Chennai sometime during 52 AD. The beautiful stained-glass windows of the basilica portray the story of the saint, who first brought Christianity to India. Quite close to San Thome, on the banks of the Adyar river, is the world headquarters of the **Theosophical Society**. The Society was founded by Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott in the USA and established at Adyar by Dr. Annie Besant, who played an important role in our country's struggle for freedom.



The Basilica of San Thome

The Adyar library within the campus has one of the world's finest collections on Eastern civilization, with 165,000 books and almost 20,000 palm-leaf manuscripts.

In the Society's gardens are shrines of all the faiths and a giant banyan tree believed to be over 200 years old. Nearly 3000 people can stand under its large canopy at a time.



The Auditorium at Kalakshetra

Not far from the Theosophical Society stands one of the world's most renowned institutions of classical music and dance - the **Kalakshetra**. It was founded in 1936 by Rukmini Devi Arundale, a well-known Theosophist.

Until the early 1930's Bharatanatyam, the classical dance of Tamil Nadu, was performed only in temples by devadasis. It was not considered proper for girls from respectable families to learn this dance. Rukmini Devi Arundale succeeded in changing this attitude and made Chennai the centre of Bharatanatyam through her institution.

Further south is the **Guindy National Park**, one of the last refuges of the blackbuck in the country. The Raj Bhavan (Government House), the Indian Institute of Technology and the Guindy Engineering College, the oldest engineering institution in the country, are located here. Adjoining the park is the **Madras Snake Park**, founded by Romulus Whitaker, an American who settled in India. The park offers people a chance to see, touch and photograph the common snakes of India.

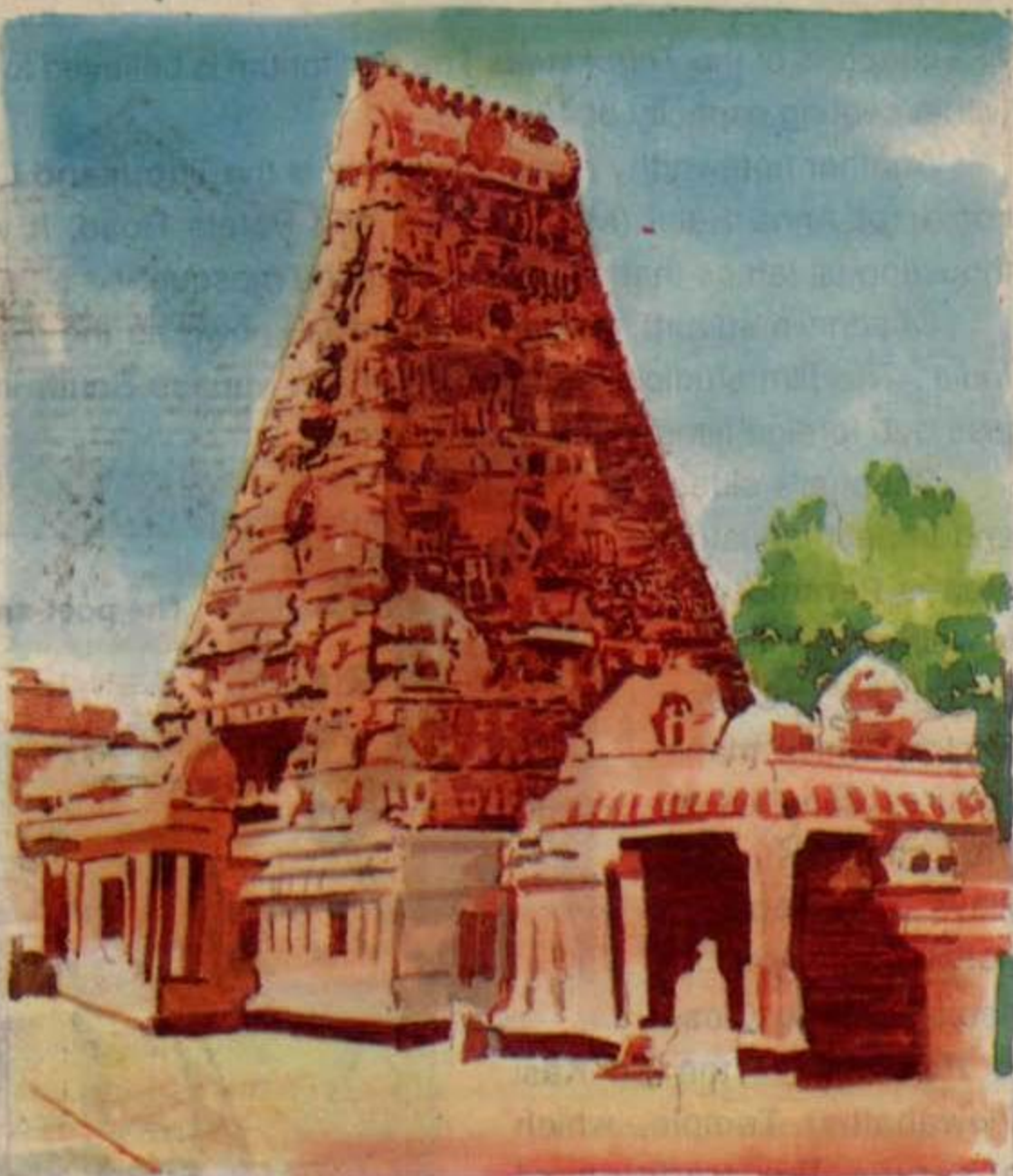
The city of Chennai includes places like **Mylapore** and **Triplicane** that date back to ancient times.

According to a legend, once when Siva and Parvati were engaged in a conversation, Parvati's mind wandered and she failed to hear what Siva was saying. This angered Siva. He cursed her and turned her into a peacock. Parvati in the form

of a peacock (*mayil*) performed penance till Siva restored her to her original form and beauty. The place where she did her penance came to be known as Mylapore, 'town of the peacock'.

At Mylapore's **Kapaliswara Temple**, Parvati is worshipped in the form of a peacock in a shrine built in the shade of a sacred *Punnai* tree, believed to be one of the oldest trees in Chennai.

A little beyond the **Kapaliswara**



The Parthasarathy Temple

Temple is the **Luz Church**, the oldest surviving European church in Chennai. It was built by the Portuguese between 1547 and 1582 in honour of Our Lady of Light. The story goes that once a few Portuguese sailors, who were shipwrecked, saw a bright light. They followed it and reached the shore safely. The light disappeared as soon as they reached land. The grateful sailors built the church at the place where they saw the light disappear.

Triplicane is a 1400-year-old settlement, famous for the **Parthasarathy Temple**, one of the city's oldest landmarks. The temple is dedicated to Lord Krishna in his role as Arjuna's 'charioteer' (hence Parthasarathy).

Beyond Triplicane to the east of Chennai is the **Valluvar Kottam**, a large auditorium dedicated to the saint, sage and poet, Thiruvallur, who lived in the first century BC. The 1330 verses of his *Thirukkural*, a treatise on righteousness, wealth and love have been inscribed on the granite pillars of the recently built auditorium.

There is a 33-metre-high temple chariot with a life-size statue of the poet seated inside, on the auditorium's terrace. A bas relief on the chariot's base depicts the



133 chapters of the *Thirukkural*. The auditorium is believed to be the largest in Asia with a seating capacity of 4000.

Another noteworthy place of worship is the **Thousand Lights Mosque** at the corner of Anna Salai (Mount Road) and Peters Road. It was named after the thousand oil-lamps that used to be lit in the mosque.

Chennai's suburb, **Kodambakkam** is known as the '*Hollywood of Southern India*'. The film studios here make films in various South Indian languages and also dub foreign films into local languages.

Chennai's oldest and largest industrial area is **Perambur**. It is well-known for the Integral Coach Factory which manufactures coaches for the country's railways. The factory's hospital is famous for heart surgery. Close to Perambur is the Sri Kasi Viswanathar Temple, which observes the tradition of keeping the Tirupati umbrellas for a night every year before they are taken to the temple of Lord Venkateswara.

This temple has a choultry, called the Tawker's choultry, attached to it. The Tawkers were one of the first Gujarati families to settle in Chennai in the 1760s. They were the leading jewellers at one time. In 1804, two women of this family established a charitable trust out of which the temple was built.

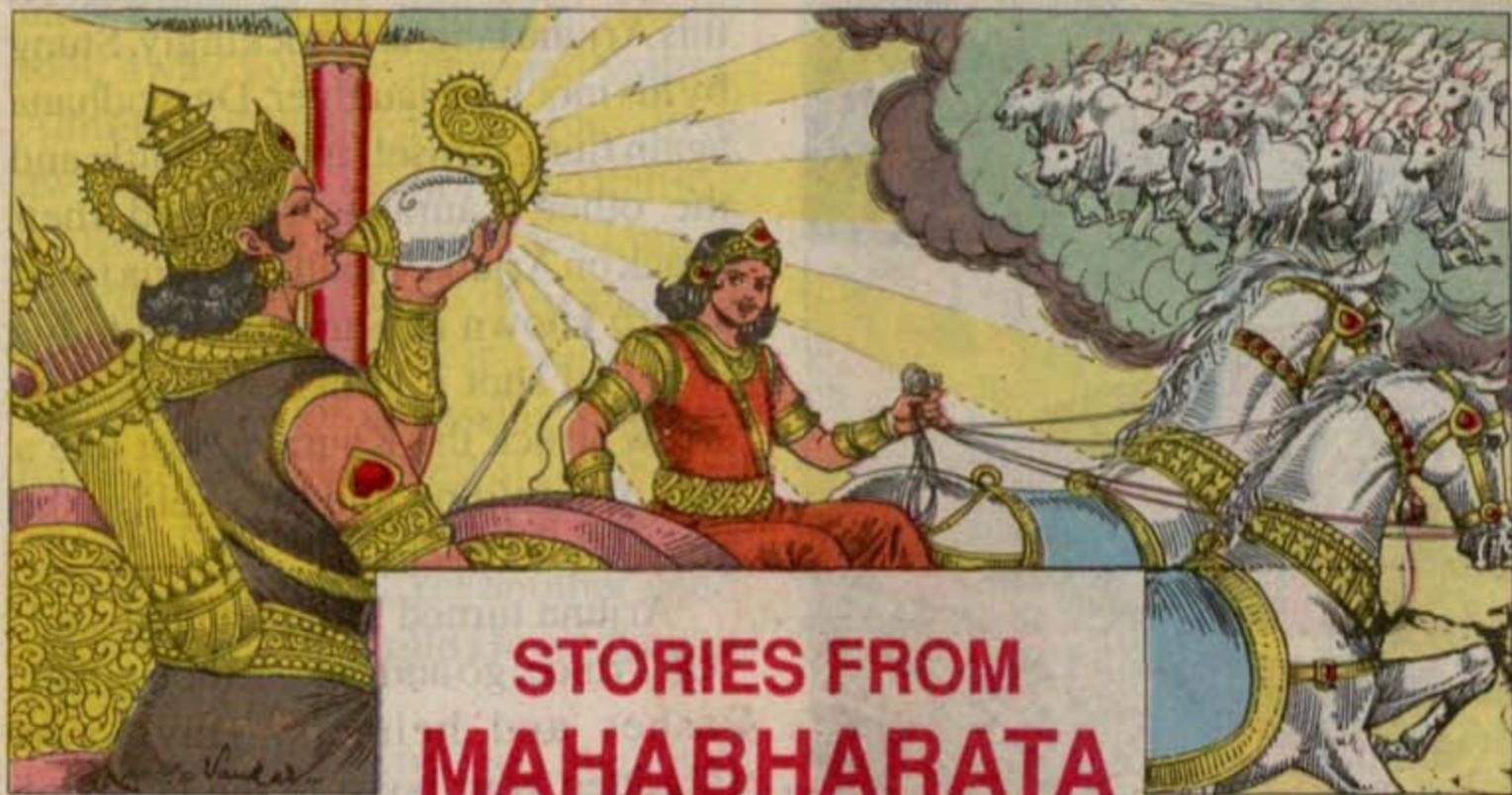


The poet-saint Thiruvallur



The Valluvar Kottam





STORIES FROM MAHABHARATA

The story so far: Having passed twelve years of exile in the forests, the Pandava princes disguise themselves and enter the service of Virata, King of Matsya, to pass their year of total secrecy. The princes safely pass their time in spite of Duryodhana's efforts to find them. At last an incident takes place which lead to their discovery. Susarma, King of the Trigartas, and Duryodhana combine their forces in order to invade Matsya and drive away the herds of cattle for which the kingdom is famous. King Virata leads his army against Susarma, and it falls on his son, Prince Uttara, to fight the Kaurava army led by Duryodhana. But Prince Uttara has no heart for warfare, and in the end Arjuna, in disguise, acts as Uttara's charioteer, and attacks the Kaurava army. Drona hears the sound of Arjuna's conch and advises Duryodhana to take a part of the army and flee to Hastinapura. Arjuna gives chase to his bitter foe.

The Kauravas tried to foil Arjuna's attempt to pursue the fleeing Duryodhana. They attacked him fiercely and he turned his attention on them.

With Uttara skilfully driving the chariot, Arjuna launched a blistering attack on Karna who tried in vain to avoid the sweeping tide of arrows. Soon the latter had to retreat. The Kauravas now banded together under the generalship of Kripacharya and advanced towards Arjuna, but the

Pandava warrior, after a furious onslaught, routed them completely. Kripacharya was obliged to retreat.

Then it was Drona's turn to attack Arjuna. For a brief moment Arjuna paused in his attack because he did not wish to wound his former teacher. Drona, observing his hesitation, quickly notched an arrow and sent it across. With great alertness Arjuna blocked the arrow with a barb of his own and soon rained a shower of arrows on Drona who, unable to stand



up to the fusillade, fell back.

Aswathama came to his father's aid, but was soon defeated. Then, Duhshasana and Karna were back in the fray, but once again they fell before the stiff attack of Arjuna. Then Bhishma drove up in his chariot and a veritable battle royal ensued between the two. Thick and fast flew the arrows until at last, bleeding and unconscious, Bhishma slumped in his chariot.

In the meantime Duryodhana had come back. Seeing the plight of Bhishma, he charged at Arjuna. Again the mighty bow twanged and a steel tipped arrow pierced the breast plate of Duryodhana. Frightened by this close brush with death, Duryodhana turned his chariot round and drove

away madly from the battlefield. At this Arjuna laughed mockingly. Stung by his mocking laughter, Duryodhana again flung himself into the battle and the other Kauravas renewed their attack on Arjuna. Finally, Arjuna fitted a barb known as Samnokastra to his bow and shot it at his enemies. The arrow struck the Kaurava host like a bolt of lightning and they fell to the ground unconscious.

Arjuna turned to Uttara and said, "Oh Prince, go and collect their silken sashes and helmets. Have you forgotten your boast to the ladies of the boudoir that you will bring back the clothes of the Kauravas to adorn the statues at home? Collect the sashes and helmets of Karna, Duryodhana, Aswathama and the others, but do not touch that grand old man, Bhishma."

Uttara did as he was advised and came back with the headgears and sashes of the Kaurava leaders. At that moment, Bhishma lifted his head and saw what was happening. He propped himself up and resumed the battle with Arjuna. But the Pandava bowman killed his horses and set him on foot.

When Duryodhana recovered from his swoon, he saw the chariot of Arjuna speeding away. "Don't let him escape, block the chariot," he shouted at his soldiers.

Then Bhishma said, "You fought against him for a long while. Why didn't you capture him then? When we were in that dead faint he could

have killed us all easily. He merely took away your helmets and sashes. Admit your defeat and let him drive away the flocks of sheep and cattle."

Reluctantly the Kauravas admitted their defeat at the hands of Arjuna and began to retrace their steps. The Pandava warrior in passing shot two more arrows which fell at the feet of Drona and Bhishma to pay his obeisance to them. Yet another shaft from Arjuna's bow split Duryodhana's crown into two.

Then Arjuna turned to Uttara and said, "Our work is done. We've got back our flocks, and the enemies are on the run. Now let's go back to the palace, but first we must hide these weapons."

Uttara hid the weapons in a hole in the tree and came back. Arjuna once again took the reins of the chariot and then turned to Uttara and said, "Don't tell your father about us, the Pandavas. Let him think that it was you who defeated the enemies, and nobody else."

But Uttara protested. "No, sir, I can't do that," he said, "I'll speak the truth, if not immediately, at the proper time. However, let me pass on the news of our victory to the palace. Then we can go in."

The glad news was sent ahead and Uttara and Arjuna followed in its wake. Meanwhile King Virata after defeating Susarma was back in the palace. He sent for his son Uttara and



was told that the latter had gone to the battlefield in a chariot driven by Brihannala, the danseuse.

On hearing this the king felt worried. "How can my tender son hope to overcome the mighty Kauravas?" he wondered aloud. But Yudhishtira consoled him. "Don't worry, my lord," he said. "As long as Brihannala is with him, he'll certainly return victorious."

Then some soldiers brought the glad tidings of Uttara's victory over the Kauravas. Yudhishtira turned to the king and said, "What did I tell you, my lord? Haven't I been proved right? As long as Brihannala is with him, victory will always be his. There can be no doubt about that."





Virata felt a surge of annoyance at these words. A mere danseuse responsible for his son's victory? Impossible!

However, he stifled his anger and ordered the city to be gaily decorated to celebrate his son's grand achievement. Then he invited Yudhishtira to participate in a game of dice with him. The two began to roll the dice. Then the king addressed Yudhishtira, "Do you realise how brave my son is? He has defeated even the mighty heroes of the Kauravas!"

Yudhishtira, concentrated on the dice, replied calmly, "I've already told you, my lord, that as long as Brihannala drives the prince's chariot,

victory will always be his."

Now, at these words, Virata's anger rose uncontrollably. "Listen, you stupid old fellow," he shouted at Yudhishtira. "Every time I speak of my son's victory, you insist that Brihannala is its cause. If you repeat that, I'll not be responsible for what happens!" But Yudhishtira, clicking the dice, replied absent-mindedly, "Even though the gods cannot win a victory over Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and Karna, Brihannala can. The fellow has that power. Therefore, I am not surprised that your son won."

At these words tossed so carelessly by Yudhishtira, rage blinded King Virata. Quick as thought, he picked up the heavy dice and flung them at Yudhishtira with all his force. They struck Yudhishtira's face with a thwack and blood began to dribble from his nose. Draupadi who saw this, came rushing to his side and held a golden chalice under his beard so that the blood may not spill on the ground.

A messenger ran in to tell the king of the arrival of Uttara and Brihannala. "Send them in," said the happy king. Yudhishtira stopped the messenger and said, "Send only Uttara. Let Brihannala go to her chamber!"

If Arjuna were to see his bleeding face, the king's life would be in danger.

A little later, Uttara came in and bowed to his father. When he raised his head, he saw the wound on Yudhishtira's face and asked in an

anguished voice, "Who has done this foul deed?"

King Virata replied, "I hit him with the dice. Every time I praise you for your victory, he would say it is all due to Brihannala. I got angry and flung the dice at him."

Uttara became highly agitated at these words. He cried out, "Oh Father, what have you done? You've insulted a venerable old Brahmin. Apologise to him for your conduct."

King Virata, sensing that something was wrong, begged Yudhishtira to forgive him.

Yudhishtira replied, "My lord, I'm not angry with you. Had even a drop of my blood fallen on the ground, great harm would have come to your land. I was only worried about that." By then the bleeding from his nose had stopped.

Then Uttara ushered Brihannala into his father's presence. Virata looked at the disguised Arjuna, but said loudly, "Uttara, you're truly my pride, a hero, a brave young man. Who can match your courage and skill? But tell me, how did you defeat Karna, Bhishma, Drona and Aswathama? Even the mighty Duryodhana, a peerless warrior, was defeated by you! What a magnificent victory was that!"

But Uttara replied solemnly, "Father, the facts are different. I had very little to do in achieving victory over the Kauravas. A god came to my rescue. When I was running away from the battlefield, this god stopped me, asked me to be his charioteer, and with his skill and bravery, routed the enemies completely."

— To continue



SPORTS SNIPPETS

He now trains them

Fahad Khan of Chennai (Madras) took to horse-riding just as fish takes to water, for, he belongs to a family of well-known trainers and jockeys. He rode in Gymkhana races for six years, often recording winners. He also participated in equestrian events, winning medals. He waited till he completed his 12th standard last year and began his career as horse trainer. He has been learning the "tricks of the trade" from his elder brother, who has by now made a name for himself



by saddling winning horses. Fahad, who is only 19 and probably one of the youngest trainers, has already made his score when the first horse he saddled won the race. His

father is a race horse owner, while his grandfather and uncles were famous trainers. Three of Fahad's cousins are jockeys.

"Gunning" for Olympics

Birendeeep Sodhi has just turned into his teens but he has already set his sights on the Olympic Games. He is, of course, in the "shooting game" and handles the gun like any professional does. That is, however, not surprising because this 13-year-old 7th standard Delhi-based boy's father and brother are shooters. Birendeeep got his first taste of shooting when Malvinder Singh Sodhi

took along his two sons on a visit to the shooting range in Firozepur, in Punjab. The elder son Ronjan Sodhi subsequently was in the Punjab team which won gold medals at the 40th National Trap and Skeet Championship. Birendeeep was seen in action in Madras last year when he erased a National mark, and this year, too, when he improved upon his points. He has only one grievance: he has to



wait for another three years to get a gun from abroad to suit his build and requirements. He is at present too young to import one in his name. So, how does he manage now? Well, he borrows his brother's gun which he finds "too big" for him.

The "Magic Girl" of tennis

Martina Hingis was riding a horse named Magic Girl and had a fall from her. A few days later she played in the Australian Open and won the Women's Singles title on January 25 becoming the youngest winner of a Grand Slam in 110 years. She was 16 years, 3 months and 26 days at that time. It was in 1887 that 15 year old Charlotte Dod won at Wimbledon. But, Grand Slam days were yet to be born then. In 1990 when Monica Seles won the French Open, she was 16 years 6 months old. Martina took four minutes less than an hour to beat 22-year-old Mary Pierce in straight sets. She had two other records already in her pocket—the Junior Championship at Wimbledon when she was only 12, and the first Doubles crown when she was hardly 15.

Golden Hour 12



1. ...penguins at the equator?

This group of islands is the only place in the world where penguins are found living side-by-side with tropical animals like the tortoise and the iguana lizard!



Where in the World Would You Find...

2. ...the smallest nation?

Covering an area of less than half a square kilometre and with a population of a thousand people, since 1929, it has had its own flag, stamps and national anthem.



3. ...the highest lake?

Lake Titicaca is 3811 m above sea-level and is 190 km long, 275 m deep and covers an area of 9065 sq km.



4. ...the widest long-span bridge?

Affectionately known as "the old coat-hanger", it was inaugurated in 1932. The bridge is 48.8 m wide and has eight lanes of traffic.



5. ...a temple that reveres rats?

Dedicated to Karni Mata, this white marble temple is a haven for rats. They are venerated, fed and protected.



STORY TRAP

THE following passage is taken from Daniel Defoe's ROBINSON CRUSOE. Defoe has made a small factual error while writing this paragraph. Can you spot the mistake?



"A little after noon I found the sea very calm... I pulled off my clothes for the weather was hot to extremity and took to water; but when I came to the ship, my difficulty was still greater to know how to get on board... I spied a small piece of rope... and by the help of that rope got up into the forecastle of the ship.. the ship's provisions were dry and untouched by the water and being very well disposed to eat, I went to the bread-room and filled my pockets with biscuits and ate them as I went..."

ACTIVITY

Cage the Bird

CUT out a square piece of cardboard 4 x 4 cm.

Attach string loops on both vertical sides.

Draw a bird on one face of the cardboard and a cage on the reverse.

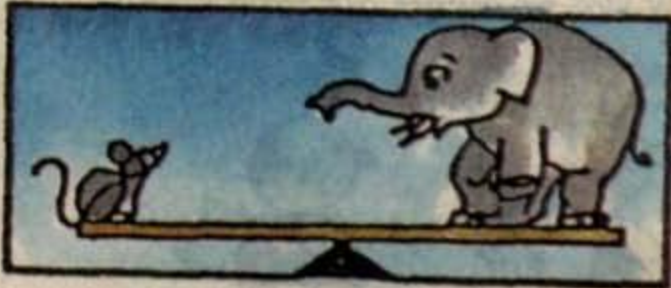
Hold the square by the strings and turn it very quickly. While it is turning the bird will appear to have got into the cage!





MIND BENDERS

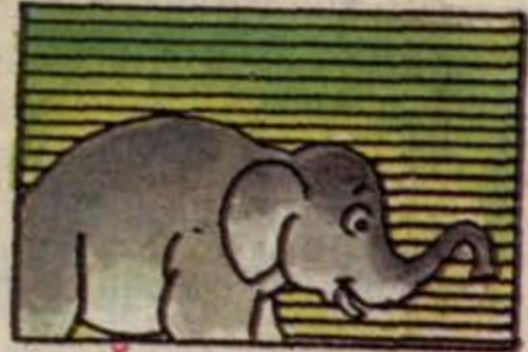
1. When does a horse have 6 legs?
2. When would a mouse and an elephant weigh the same?



3. How would you make $9+9+9+1+1$ add up to 20?
4. I was at my friend's house. As I was about to leave, my friend's younger brother, who had just come in, warned me not to go by the main road. "There's a snake lying there," he said. "Looks like a poisonous variety."
"How did you get past it?" I asked.
"It was sleeping when I came," he said. "Its eyes were closed. It might have got up now."
I realised he was trying to play a joke on me and ignored his warning. I strolled down the main road and as I had expected there was no reptile there.
How did the writer know his friend's brother was trying to deceive him?



5. When do elephants have 8 feet?
6. What has two hands but never washes its face?



7. It has a neck but cannot swallow. What is it?
8. A French soldier who had lost an arm in battle was presented to Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon pinned the medal of the Legion of Honour on his breast. "That is for your lost arm," he said.
"What would you have given me if I had lost the other arm too, sire?" asked the soldier.

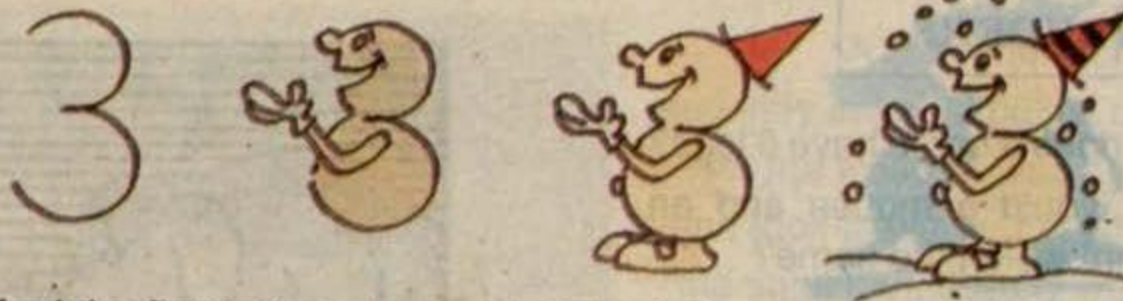


"I should have made you an officer," said Napoleon.

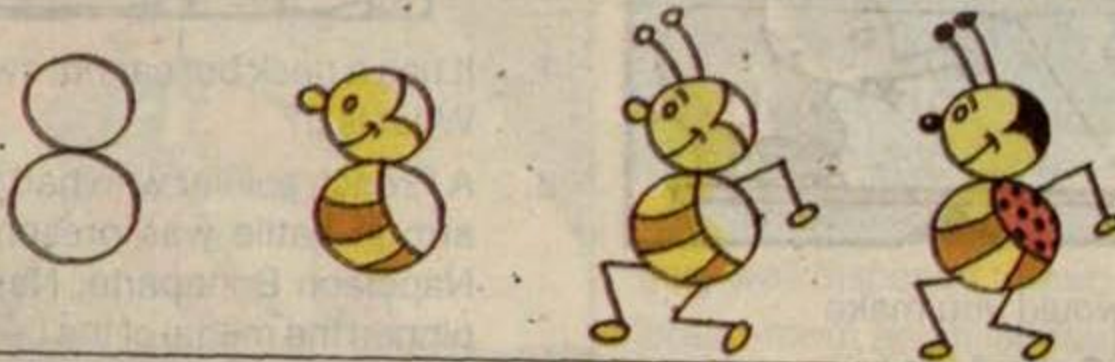
At this, the soldier pulled out his sword and cut off his other arm. Do you think this story could be true? If not, why?

Draw A Snowman!

With a few strokes the figure 3 can be transformed into a snowman!



And the figure 8 can be made to look like an insect out for a stroll!



Answers to Golden Hour No. 11

WHERE IN THE WORLD

1. In central Java, Indonesia.
2. In the White Mountains, California, U.S.A.
3. On the bank of the River Thames in London.
4. In Venice, Italy.

PICTURE TRAP

Columbus' ship is flying the Stars and Stripes — the American flag!

PICTURE QUIZ

1. 35 triangles!
3. From all of them!



MIND BENDERS

1. The spare tyre in the boot of his car was flat!
2. The other end of the rope is not tied to anything!
3. The wet arcs made by the windshield wipers are seen on only one car.
4. The man was blind but he was not dumb! He asked for a saw!

NEWS FLASH

The biggest ever

An art teacher in Kerala sent a Christmas card to the management of her school. Its message pleaded with the school authorities to take back in true Xmas spirit the 11 employees whose services were dispensed with last year. The special message apart, what was unique about the card is its size—1,332 inches in length (111 ft!) and 11 inches in breadth. It weighed 870 grammes. Lekha S. Babu took 50 hours, spread over 10 days, to prepare the card.

Longest cake

It was not a Christmas cake, because it was made to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the formation of the United Arab Emirates (see *Chandamama*,

moment it was symbolically cut, it vanished from the table in no time. It was meant for 200,000 people, but the 50,000 plus crowd eagerly waiting for the joyous moment literally pounced on the cake, especially because a rumour was afloat that gold coins and the keys to six Mercedes-Benz cars had been hidden inside the cake! The cake—actually there were 5,175 individual cakes placed edge to edge—was made of 30,800 kg fruits, 5,700 seedless dates, 8,600 kg flour, 67,300 eggs, and tonnes and tonnes of ghee, icing sugar, and baking powder. The 5,000 odd cakes were made at 28 leading hotels over a period of 25 days and nights.

Record sale

Last year, the U.S.A. released a postage stamp with the portrait of the late Marilyn Monroe, the popular movie actress. In less than one year, 46,000,000 stamps were sold. In 1993, the country had brought out a stamp in honour of that famous pop singer, Elvis Presley. In three years, 124,000,000 stamps were sold, creating a new record in stamp sale. Incidentally, this page last month carried an item on the Mother Teresa stamp issued by San Marino. That is the only stamp ever released in honour of a living person. San Marino, the smallest republic in Europe and oldest republic in the world, has a population of just 24,300. All those who are born in that country are its citizens; they may settle down in another country, but will not lose their citizenship and voting rights.



January 1997). It was 2.5 km long and weighed 74 tonnes. The cake was spread along the sea front in Dubai, and the



A lesson well received

Sadanand was a simple, straight forward man. He had a hand-to-mouth existence. Sowmya was his only child. She lost her mother when she was still a baby. His wife's death was not only a shock for Sadanand, but after her departure he had to face several problems and pass through many difficulties. However, he saw to it that the little girl was brought up without her feeling any want.

Sowmya was now of marriageable age. She was extremely beautiful; in fact, her beauty was the talk of the town. She was herself proud of her charming looks and used to look at herself in the mirror at least three times a day. She dreamt that a prince or the son of a zamindar would ask for her hand.

It was all a wishful thinking. No

millionaire's son sent a proposal or came to see her. Whoever had expressed a desire to meet her or her father had brought proposals from were all from not very affluent circumstances. And everybody asked for large sums as dowry. Where would he turn to for so much money? So, Sadanand had to send them back disappointed. Sowmya often suppressed her feelings, though she could not sometimes control her tears. After all, she was a young woman and could not always disclose her feelings.

One day, a youngster called Sukumar came forward to marry her, without demanding any dowry. Sadanand told him that he would arrange for as decent a wedding as possible. Whatever he said was acceptable to Sukumar. Friends of



Sadanand complimented Sowmya and told her that she was fortunate in getting a person like Sukumar as her husband. But she was unhappy because all her dreams were being shattered. However, her marriage to Sukumar took place. He had a small place of his own where they set up a home for themselves. They could have two square meals a day and there were minimum comforts, too. But Sowmya was not happy and contented. She complained that she did not have a single silk sari, or many ornaments, not even a comfortable bed.

One day, one of Sukumar's relations called on them to invite them to his place and to participate in a wedding in the family. That man had helped Sukumar in many ways, and so he was obliged to him and, therefore, could not but accept his

invitation. He insisted on Sowmya going with him. "But how can I go for a wedding?" she argued. "I don't have even a good necklace! I've just a black thread to tie my *mangalyasutra* on. And no silk sari! How then can I go for a wedding? What would all the people think of me?"

Sukumar pacified her and said he would find a solution to her problems. "All right, I shall buy you a silk sari. But I may not be able to buy ornaments immediately. You may borrow a necklace from our neighbour Annapurna for a couple of days. We shall return it when we come back."

Sowmya thought she would somehow manage for the time being. That evening Sukumar brought a silk sari from the market. Sowmya called on Annapurna and borrowed a necklace from her. Husband and wife got ready





to go for the wedding.

At the wedding place, Sowmya was the cynosure of all eyes. 'What a beauty!' commented everybody. 'Look at her sari! The colour is so matching with her complexion!' some people remarked. 'And see her modesty! She has not bedecked herself with ornaments. She seems to have chosen a plain necklace and that suits her well.' Sowmya was happy when she heard people praising her.

The very next day, Sukumar and Sowmya returned home. She was keen on returning the necklace she had borrowed from Annapurna promptly. When she opened the box, the necklace could not be found. It was missing! Where had it disappeared?

Had someone stolen it? She went and told her husband. "You must have been careless!" said Sukumar. "Did you leave it at the wedding house somewhere?"

Sowmya could not remember whether she had taken it off for some time. "No, I was wearing it all the time. Now it is missing!" she replied him.

"How can you say it is missing?" Sukumar was now getting angry. "If it had been ours, we can very well suffer the loss. But it belongs to someone else and we have to return it to her. Will she forgo a costly ornament? What a shame! I don't have money to buy one and substitute it. All right, we shall mortgage our house and take a loan and buy a necklace!" he said as he left home hurriedly.

Sowmya was upset very much. Because of her carelessness and forgetfulness, they had to incur some unnecessary expenditure and face the prospect of a loan as well. That evening, Sukumar managed to get hold of some money and they both set out for the jewellery shop. Fortunately, they found a necklace that looked exactly like the one they had borrowed from Annapurna. They paid for it and took it home. The next morning, Sowmya returned the necklace she had taken from Annapurna. She heaved a great sigh of relief.

But Sowmya was tormented by the thought that there was a loan to be

repaired. A sudden change came over her. She decided that she would try to save money. She dispensed with the services of the maid and did all the chores in the house herself. She undertook tailoring jobs and earned some money. She made good use of her compound and grew vegetables and sold them in the market.

Five years went by. Now she was no more conceited about her beauty and charm. She was a responsible housewife, capable and competent. She handed over all her savings to her husband and said, "Now you may return the loan and also get our house released from the mortgage."

"You're really clever, Sowmya," Sukumar complimented her. "This is real life, not parading oneself in silk saris and glittering ornaments. I'm really happy that you're now a changed person. By the way, that necklace was not stolen by any thief. When you went for your bath, you left it on the window sill and forgot to

take it back. I was watching all that. So I brought the necklace here and handed it to the jeweller and took him into confidence. That's how we could get the same necklace when we went to the shop. I did not mortgage our house. And I haven't taken any loan from my office either, as I had told you. You may keep this money and buy whatever you like, a sari or ornaments!"

Sowmya gave a wide smile, to assure her husband that she had no misunderstanding with him about the strategy he took to teach her a lesson. "I now realise what a false prestige I had about my beauty, how to maintain that beauty, and how to parade myself in front of others. You've really taught me a BIG lesson. I know how to spend this money... in the next few months, when we get a little one to take care of, we'll need all this money and more at that time."

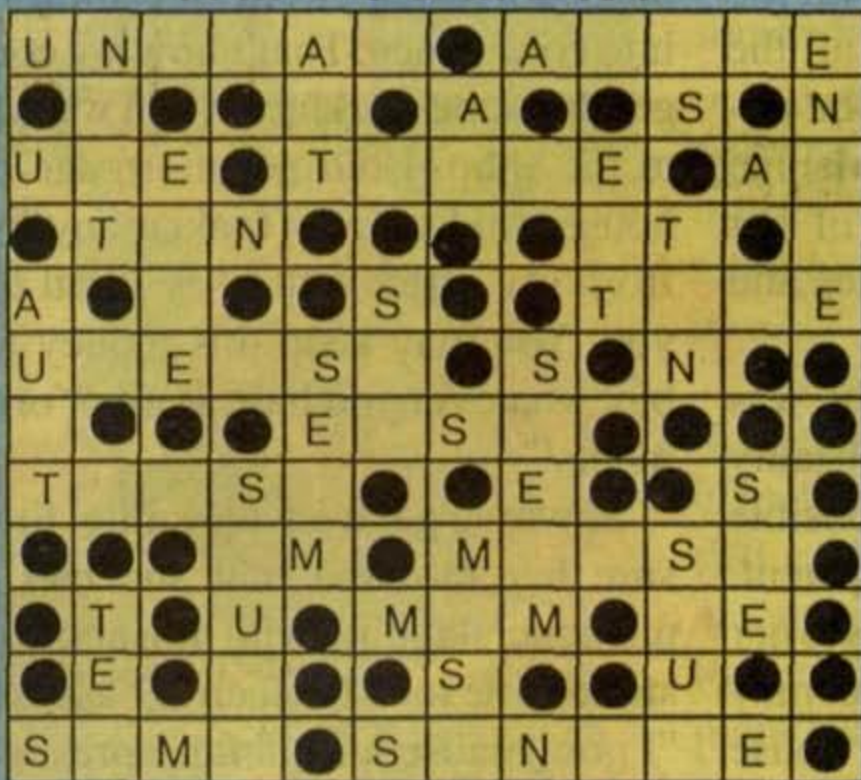
"Oh! Is that so?" Sukumar laughed aloud.





Find 34 words from the single word

'AMUSEMENT'



Clues

2 letter words -	6
3 letter words -	9
4 letter words -	9
5 letter words -	7
6 letter words -	3

Total words - 34

The solution will appear next month

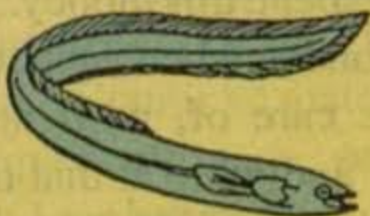
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C

ROSS WORD

-Bhaskar

S P O O N



Using the picture clues make connecting words

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CONCERN FOR OTHERS



Margabandhu started for the town to attend to some business. His wife packed three *rotis* to be eaten on the way. He took a short cut, but that happened to be through a forest. He walked fast to cross the forest as early as possible. Suddenly, a young man appeared from nowhere, much to his surprise.

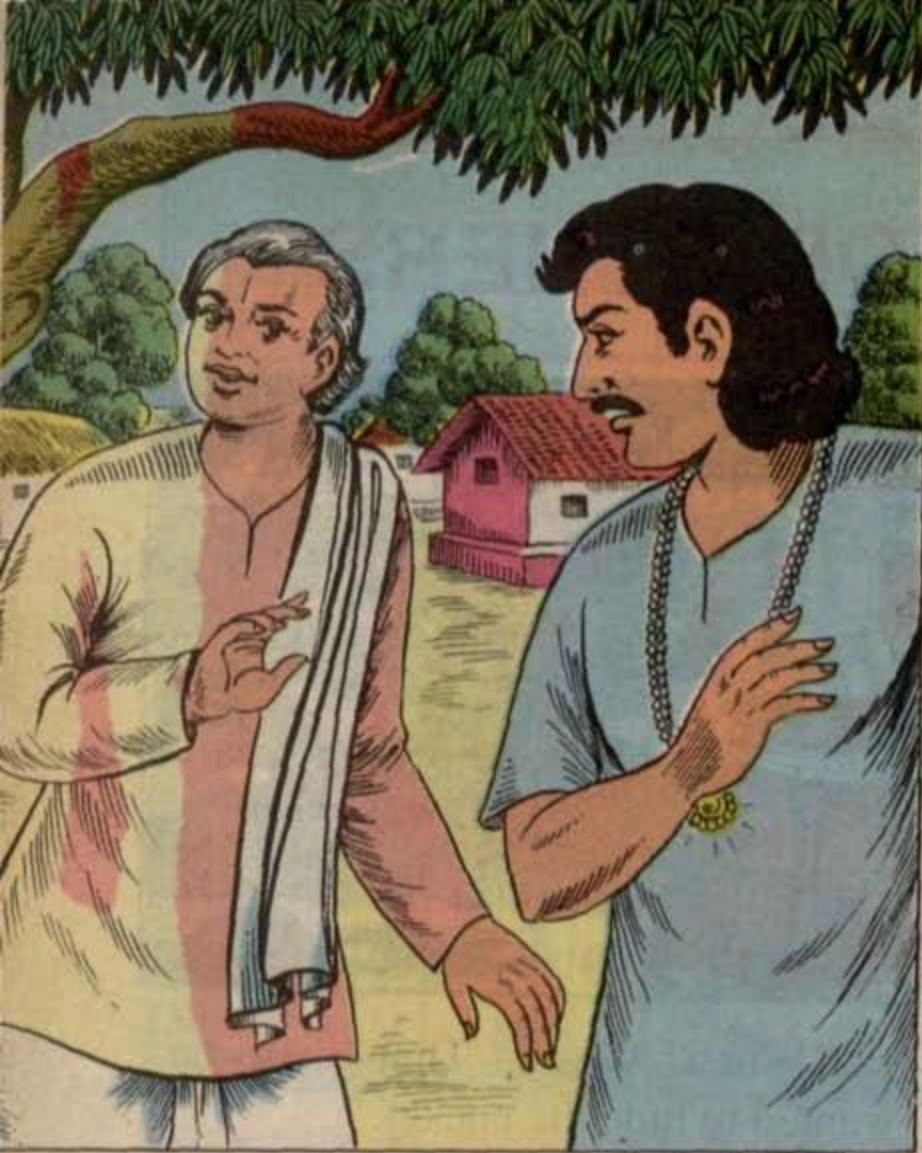
The youth looked like he was from a rich family. He was wearing a costly dress, though it looked rather shabby and it was smelly, too. He asked Margabandhu whether he could give him something to eat. He remembered the packet of rotis in his hand and tried to hide it. He had not eaten anything in the morning, as he was in a hurry to start for the town. And if he were to spare the rotis for the young man, what would he himself

eat? When? Where? That is why he wanted to hide the packet.

He did not succeed, for, the young man had already seen the packet. He took it from him. At once he opened the packet and began gobbling whatever it contained!

Margabandhu had the shock of his life. What a fate! It was now certain that he would have to go hungry till he reached the town. And the way he saw the young man eat, he guessed that he would not have eaten for days together. He stood aghast till the youth finished eating and wiped his mouth and fingers with the packet.

"Have you heard of Kamlapur?" said the young man. "I'm the son of the Zamindar there. I wanted to go to the town, but I lost my way and entered this forest. I have been roaming and



roaming without finding a way either to go to the town or return to my place. If you would take me back to Kamlapur, I'm sure my father would offer a reward to you."

A reward from the Zamindar himself? Margabandhu felt elated. "Come on," he told the young man, "follow me, I shall take you home." Though he knew he was straying away from the town, Margabandhu did not mind the detour.

On reaching the Zamindar's bungalow, he was shown all courtesies and rewarded with a pearl necklace for his service. He was very happy. After all, a pearl necklace would be priceless. He decided to return to his village. He would go to the town

some other day.

On his way, he put on the necklace and walked head held high. He was proud of his new possession and wanted to show off in front of his friends. He saw Gopinath walking in front of him and clapped to stop him. "Wait a moment, Gopi!" he shouted. The man halted in his tracks. When he went near his friend, he asked him, "See this necklace! I got it from the Zamindar of Kamlapur. It is a reward!"

But Gopinath did not care to look at the necklace at all! In fact, he looked annoyed. "I'm hurrying to Keshav's house. He's finalising his marriage proposal, and needs my help. I'm in a hurry!" He suddenly remembered that Keshav was not a stranger to Margabandhu. "Why don't you also come?"

Margabandhu did not quite appreciate the invitation, when his intention was something quite different—to drum-beat his achievements— but Gopinath was not interested in listening to him at all. "Tit for tat!" I've some important work, so I can't go with you," said Margabandhu curtly and turned around.

On his way, Margabandhu met the old teacher Vidyadhar and greeted him with folded hands. "Do you see the pearl necklace on me?" he straight away asked him without as much as an introduction.

Vidyadhar nodded. "Our *pundit* has come back from the capital after receiving rewards and citations from the king. I'm going to meet him and congratulate him. Are you coming along?"

"What is this?" thought Margabandhu, who was expecting the teacher at least to ask him from where he got the necklace and how. He was annoyed with him. "No, sir, I've some important work to do." He turned round and went his way before the teacher could persuade him to accompany him.

As he walked, he saw Manohar coming from the opposite direction. "What's this you're wearing, my friend?" he queried Margabandhu. "It looks like a pearl necklace. Are they real pearls or only imitation? Did you buy it, or did you get it as a present? Who gave it to you? How much did you pay?" A veritable shower of questions!

Margabandhu was quite impressed with Manohar. After all, he *did* notice the necklace even before he drew his attention to it. "Don't have any doubts. They're real pearls. I got the necklace from the Zamindar of Kamlapur, as a reward. Do you think I can afford such a priceless necklace?" He then waited for another shower of inquisitive questions from Manohar.

"Bandhu, did you know that our Parthasarathi has dug a well?" Manohar asked. It was not anything



that Margabandhu was eagerly expecting from his friend. "He dug, and dug, and dug deep for days together. There was not a drop of water. Then yesterday he hit the earth just once, and I am told water began gushing. Today the well is half full of water. I'm on my way to see it. Why don't you come with me?"

Margabandhu was now almost angry. He was expecting Manohar to ask him about the reward and what he did to earn it. Instead, he was telling him everything about a well! "I'm sorry I can't come, I've some urgent work." He excused himself and went his way.

On returning home, his wife was surprised. "What happened? Didn't



you go to the town? Ah! A pearl necklace? I've been wanting one like that for a long time. Please take it off, let me take a good look at it!"

"I'm not going to give it to you!" said Margabandhu, catching hold of the necklace. "I got it as a reward from the Zamindar of Kamlapur. It's mine, and I shall wear it myself!"

His wife ridiculed him. "Men don't wear necklaces, that too pearl necklaces! If men were to put on a pearl necklace, others will only laugh. Shame!"

"Oh! You don't have to laugh!" Margabandhu chided his wife. "It was the Zamindar himself who put this on my neck. I told you it was a reward for something I did for him. I won't remove it from my neck!"

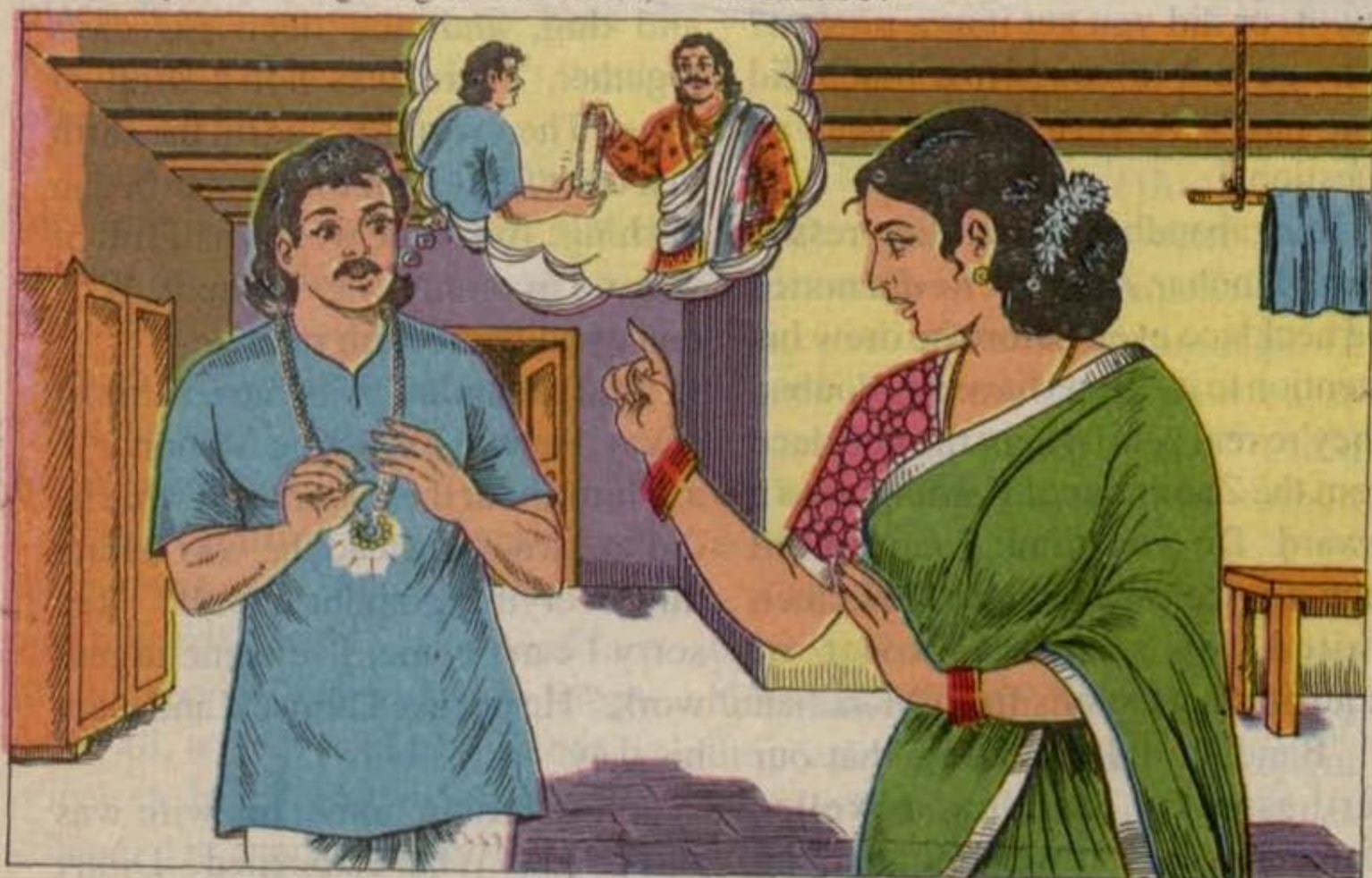
"So you went to Kamlapur? You told me you were going to the town,"

protested his wife. "What service did you do for the Zamindar?"

Margabandhu then narrated what happened in the forest and on his way back. "That's nothing great that you did!" remarked his wife. "When that youth asked for food, you were reluctant to give him the rotis, and he almost grabbed the packet from your hands. And you took him home in the hope of a reward. That's not much of a service or sacrifice. The reward should actually come to me because I had given you that packet of rotis!"

"But look at people like Gopinath, Vidyadhar, and Manohar! Each one of them is selfish," argued Margabandhu.

"Why should you find fault with others?" questioned his wife. "Just because they didn't ask you about the necklace?"



"I drew their attention to it, still none of them asked me about it; nobody took any interest in it. One was more concerned about somebody's marriage proposal, another was more interested in somebody's well, and someone else was more eager to praise somebody else! Nobody had eyes to look at *my* necklace!"

"You forget that you're the most selfish amongst them all!" his wife rebuked him. "You met three different persons, and each one of them was concerned about, not himself but somebody else. They wanted to share the joy of others. You're also someone like them, and still you refused to go with them! You were worried about showing off yourself. You wanted others to talk about you. If you deny food to another, is it something great? Was it anything great to escort a young man expecting a reward? What do you expect the others to find in you to

praise you?"

Margabandhu was now ashamed of himself. He could not even look at the face of his wife. He stared through the window without seeing anything. "Forget all that," his wife continued. "After all, I'm a woman, I'm your wife. Do I have ornaments? You have not spent any money to buy me a necklace. Still when I expressed a desire for this, you refused to part with it! Isn't it utter selfishness on your part? Do you think I'll have a word of praise for you?"

Margabandhu heaved a heavy sigh. He took out the necklace and gave it to his wife. "It's yours. You may wear it. I'm just leaving. I shall meet Keshav and help him fix up his marriage, go and convey my good wishes to the pundit, and take a look at Parthasarathi's well."

Margabandhu for once decided not to be selfish anymore. He decided to be concerned about the welfare of others, too.



RELEASE FROM THE CURSE



Dhruva had started a *tapas* day and night, uninterruptedly. It went on for days, weeks, months, and years. It appeared there would be no respite from his tapas. Lord Indra was shaken by the intensity of the tapas. Something had to be done to break the tapas. He called one of the devas called Vrata. He was turned into a rakshasa and sent to Dhruva to disturb his concentration. Vrata came down to the earth and tormented Dhruva. A muni was witness to the rakshasa's action and cursed him: "Remain a rakshasa for ever!"

Vrata could do nothing to get released from the curse and he roamed the earth as a rakshasa. He crossed the Sabari river. He began swallowing any human being who came his way. Though a rakshasa, Vrata had the

power to know what was happening in the heavens, on the earth, and in the nether world.

Where Sabari met river Godavari, a great muni had established an ashram at the confluence. One day the disciples in the ashram were collecting fruits from the forest. Vrata happened to come there at that time. The boys ran helter-skelter when they saw the rakshasa. But one of them called Bharata was caught by Vrata.

The children went and informed the muni, who hurried to the rakshasa and pleaded with him: "Please leave him free. You may swallow me instead."

"That's impossible," said the rakshasa. "I don't normally spare anybody who has come in my hands. But I can do one thing. You take him

and hide him anywhere. If I fail to find out the hiding place within one day, I won't kill him."

The muni then sat in meditation chanting the different names of Brahma, the creator. The Lord was pleased, and he appeared before him. The muni pleaded: "Please save my son Bharata from Vrata the rakshasa." The Lord took the boy to Brahmatalok and made him a petal of the lotus on which he used to sit.

The next day, the rakshasa went up to the muni. "Your son is in Brahmatalok and is hiding as a petal of the Lord's lotus."

The muni pleaded once again, "I request you not to harm him."

"All right, you hide him once again," said the rakshasa.

The muni worshipped Siva, and the Lord appeared before him. "Please save my son, Bharata!" Siva took the boy to his abode Kailas and turned him into a flower. Parvati adorned her hair with the flower.

Vrata went to the muni and said, "Your son is now part of the hair-do of Parvati. I shall give you one more chance."

The muni now began to worship Vishnu. The Lord appeared before him. "Please save my son Bharata!" he pleaded to the Lord. He took Bharata to his abode, Vaikunta.

Vrata went back to the muni. This time the rakshasa had been unable to find the boy's whereabouts. He shouted: "Where's your son?"

"Wherever he is, he will respond to your call, but you must free him," said the muni with confidence.

"Bharata! Bharata!" the rakshasa shouted. "If you come to me, I shall release you!"

"Here I am!" The rakshasa and the muni heard Bharata's voice. And he emerged from the chest of the rakshasa himself!

He fell dead and he was now Vrata once again. He, too, had been released from the curse.



WHAT IS BEAUTY?

Parthasarathy was blind. He had three sons. When the time came, all of them got married. All three daughters-in-law were beautiful. One day, an artist went to their house. He wanted to paint the portrait of a beautiful woman. He met the three daughters-in-law and found all of them equally charming. He was in a dilemma. He asked them: "Who is the most beautiful amongst you?" And he got the answer "I'm the one" from each of them. Next he turned to their husbands. And each one of them answered: "My wife." The artist put the question to their neighbours. They all said that all three of them were equally beautiful.

That night, the artist stayed in the house. He confided to Parthasarathy about his predicament. "My daughters-in-law are beautiful, aren't they? And that's what their husbands say, and my neighbours also say, and you agree with them. But, what you see as beauty is all superficial. Who has seen their inner beauty? I've found out who is most beautiful among them from their qualities of head and heart. She is the one who has married my second son."

The artist thanked Parthasarathy for his advice and guidance. "All right, I shall paint the portrait of your second daughter-in-law."



SON OR DAUGHTER?



Ramsharma of Rasipuri had two children, both daughters. He had hoped that at least the second child would be a son. He was dejected and would spend most of his time sitting in a gloomy corner and hesitating to meet people. One day, Narayan Shastri of Namagiri came to Rasipuri and stayed with Ramsharma, who confided in him and asked him how he could get over his dejection.

Narayan Shastri was more or less in the same boat as Ramsharma. He, too, had two daughters. However, his third child was a son. He explained to Ramsharma how it happened. "There's a temple in our place dedicated to Vajreswari. She is a powerful deity. The annual festival comes off at the beginning of the summer season. If one were to offer

her newly harvested paddy, it is believed that the devotee will be blessed with whatever he wishes for. But one thing, there should be enough paddy to cover the pathway around the *sanctum sanctorum*, and ten or twenty men to tread on the paddy three times, after taking a dip in the temple tank each time. And as they walk on the paddy, they should wear only wet clothes. If men were to walk on the paddy and the devotee wishes for a son, a male child will be born. If anyone wishes for a female child, then instead of men, ten to twenty unmarried women should walk on the paddy. In my case, I arranged for men to tread on the paddy—I needed a cartload of it—and I got the gift of a son."

Ramsharma was overjoyed. After





all, a cartload of newly harvested paddy and twenty men willing to walk on the paddy wearing wet clothes would not be difficult to arrange for. He waited for the festival, and a day before the festival, he started for Namagiri. On the way, there was an unusually heavy downpour and the road was flooded. The cart carrying paddy could not go forward. Ramsharma decided to halt at the nearest village.

The priest of the village was not known to Ramsharma intimately. But, when he disclosed that he was unable to proceed to Namagiri, he invited him to stay with him. During their conversation, Ramsharma told him what was taking him to Namagiri.

"Look here, my friend," said the village *purohit* after carefully listening to his guest, "we've all studied the scriptures. We should not become slaves to such superstitions. You've two daughters; and you now wish to have a son. For that you want to propitiate gods and goddesses. How are you certain that the third child would also be not a daughter? Think of your added responsibility then, of performing the marriage of one more daughter!"

Ramsharma did not give him any lengthy reply. He merely said, "Whoever plants a sapling will also have to water it to grow. God's will is inscrutable, they say."

The *purohit* merely smiled. A little later, they sat together to eat their dinner, when Ramsharma asked the priest, "Sir, how many sons have you? How many daughters?"

Before he replied, the woman who came to serve them said, "My father has only one daughter, and that's me. I had an elder brother. He was born after my father worshipped at the temple of Vajreshwari and made an offering of paddy. But he died when he was hardly twenty. My mother could not bear the grief and she, too, passed away quite soon. After that, my father took a disciple and taught him the temple rituals and later asked him to marry me. He is now the priest in a temple in the neighbouring village. He's like a son to my father, and

whatever he brings home is our only income."

Ramsharma felt ashamed. He did not offer his sympathies for the tragedies they had suffered. "All of God's creations are equal. There's no difference between male and female, man and woman. Both have the same intelligence and the same greatness. We worship goddesses, too, giving the same reverence as we give to gods. Lakshmi, Saraswati, Parvati, they are all female forms of divinity. In our country, we don't differentiate between man and woman. So, I wouldn't mind even if I get another daughter, if that's going to be my fate. And I'll look after her like my two elder ones. Anyway, having started for Namagiri, let me make the offering and wait for my blessings."

"You'll surely get a son," said the purohit's daughter. "There's no doubt about it."

Next morning Ramsharma started for Namagiri. There he met the priest and ascertained the time when he should make the offering. By then the twenty men who would help him make the offering had reached the place, avoiding the flooded roads. Once the worship was completed they all went back to Rasipuri.

In course of time, Ramsharma's wife gave birth to twins—a boy and a girl. As they grew up, they were alike in every respect—appearance, behaviour, character. He brought them



up without discriminating them. They were named Pasupati and Parvati. They were given the same kind of education, and were taught temple rituals. Ramsharma became more prosperous after their birth.

The eldest daughter was given in marriage to the son of the zamindar's family purohit. The second daughter was married into a rich family. Now he must find a bride and a groom for Pasupati and Parvati.

They too grew into intellectuals. They became famous as poets—twin poets, which was a rare sight. Their poems became widely popular. The zamindar of the place heard about them and invited them to his durbar. The people assembled were thrilled



when they listened to their poetic compositions.

The way the zamindar honoured and rewarded Pasupati and Parvati could not be appreciated by the *pundit* in the durbar. He felt envious of the twin-poets. He found an opportunity to quiz them on various subjects—literature, language, science—but Pasupati and Parvati answered him correctly and without getting excited or annoyed with him. The audience frequently cheered them.

The pundit felt irritated by the happenings in the durbar. "I can also compose poems like you do," he said and began reciting a few verses. But they were all flattering the zamindar, who could see through the pundit's motive. The audience, too, realised

his game-plan.

"O most respected pundit, we see that you are capable of climbing high in imagination," said the twin-poets.

The pundit was happy that the young poets had at least recognised his talents. At the same time he was bewildered to see the zamindar as well as the audience laughing. He did not know what had gone wrong.

"You're a simpleton!" remarked the zamindar turning to the pundit. "Climbing high in imagination has a double meaning, you fool! You're like a monkey climbing up a palm!" He then went on to hand over more gifts to the two young poets. "From now on, you both will adorn my durbar!" he declared.

- Words cut more than swords
- Actions speak louder than words
- Nothing dries sooner than a tear
- The rich knows not who his friend is



Where is the Reserve Bank of India located? Who was the first Governor? What is the difference between the Governor of RBI and the Finance Secretary?

-Vijayender Kumar, Hyderabad

The headquarters of RBI is in Bombay. The Reserve Bank was established in 1935, for issuing currency. The Reserve Bank of India was started as a shareholders bank. In January 1949, it was nationalised. The first Governor was Mr. H.V.R. Iyengar. The RBI Governor's post is considered senior to that of Finance Secretary who belongs to the Civil Service. A Finance Secretary, after he leaves the Civil Service, may be considered for the post of Governor.

Which is known as the City of Seven Hills?

-Priyanka J. Kini, Jamnagar

Rome is believed to have sprung up on seven hills. Right from ancient times, it came to be called the City of Seven Hills. There is a saying: "Rome was not built in a day", which shows the city took shape in so many years. The city of Trivandrum, capital of Kerala, is also believed to be built on seven hills. We also have the Lord of the Seven Hills, referring to Lord Venkateswara of Tirumala-Tirupati.

FROM OUR READERS

World landmarks

I like "Coastal Journeys" very much. After this series comes to an end, I request you to start another series in which information on different countries—like landmarks, the people, their culture—can be given. That will be really exciting.

Mushtaq Syed, Bandra, Mumbai

Beautiful stories

I have been a regular reader of yours since I was a kid. Thanks for those beautiful stories and General Knowledge, and 'Towards Better English'.

Katya, Visakhapatnam

Much knowledge

In the Chandamama Supplement, the feature 'Common Trees of India' has provided much knowledge—like the piece on the cashew tree. There is one correction. In Tamil, it is known as *Mundirimaram*, and not *Munthamamidi* as stated.

A. Balamurugan, Puttur, Andhra Pradesh

PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



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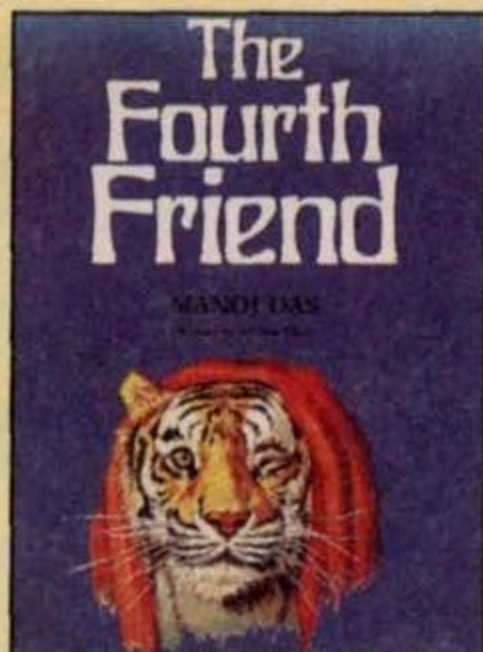
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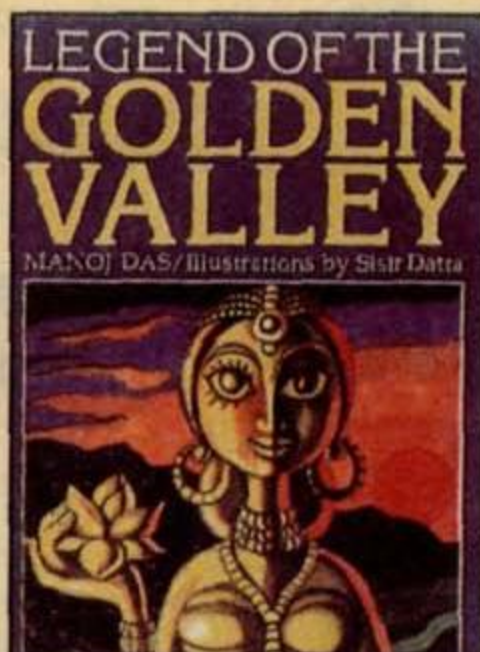
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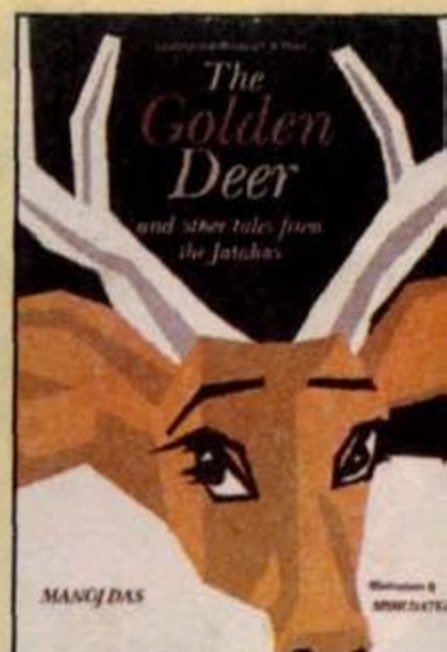




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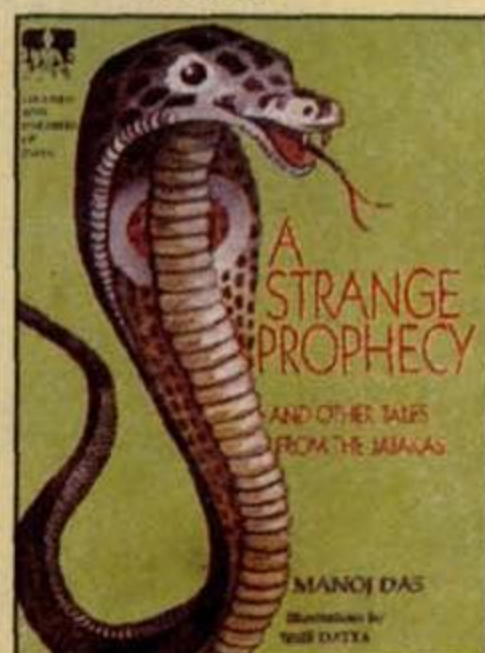
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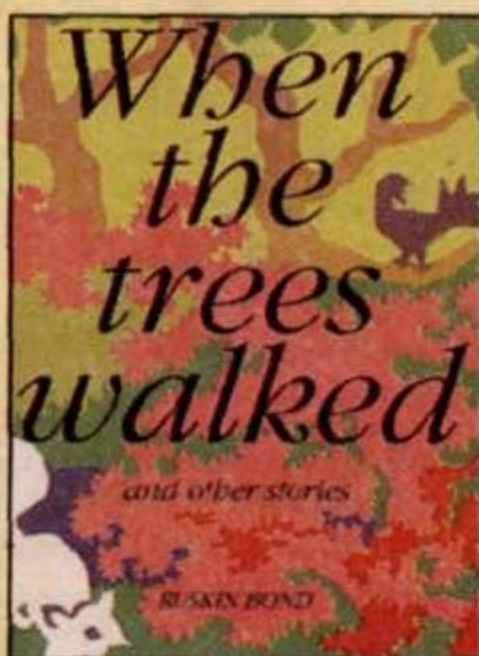
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